Vietnam Courier

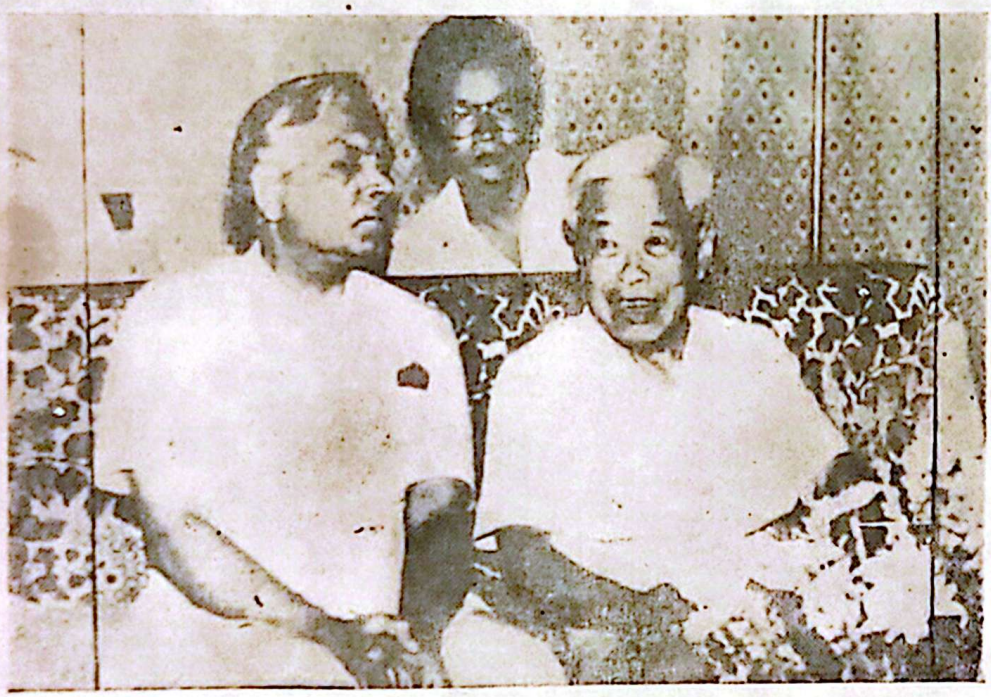
A MONTHLY REVIEW No. 9 – 1987

- Renovation of the Activities of the National Assembly
- Economic Tasks for the Last Half of 1987
- Ten Years of Vietnam – Laos Cooperation
- Vietnam and the Day of the Five Billion

FIRST SESSION OF THE EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITIES

● *Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh granting an interview to Füzes Oszkar, correspondent of NEPSZABADSAG, organ of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. (21 June 1987)*

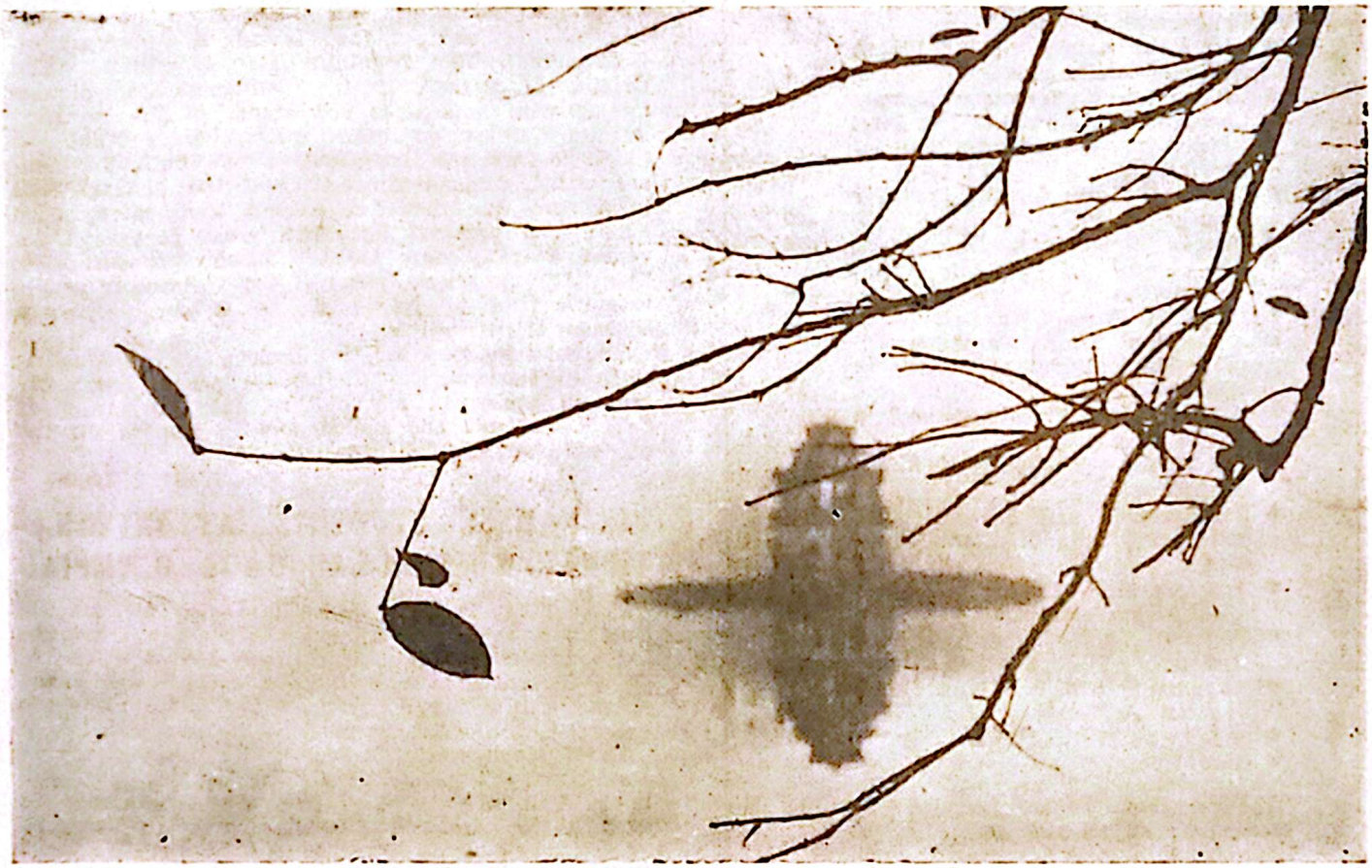


● *Chairman of the Council of Ministers Pham Hung receiving Indian Minister of State for External Affairs Natwar Singh. (6 July 1987)*

● *The Presidium of the 25th session of the Interim Mekong Committee. (Ho Chi Minh City 12 June 1987)*

Photos : VNA

PHOTO EXHIBITION ON HANOI



Awards have been given to the best entries in a photographic exhibition entitled "Hanoi — the beautiful and the not-so-beautiful sides" which was part of a drive for a new lifestyle launched in 1986.

The drive is jointly sponsored by municipal institutions including the Hanoi Fatherland Front Committee, the Service of Culture and Information, the Committee for Population and Family Planning, the Cultural Association, the daily *Hanoi Moi* (New Hanoi), and Hanoi Radio. In support of the drive competitions have been organized, with the participation of writers, poets, music composers, painters, and playwrights.

From the photographic competition, 119 entries have been chosen for an exhibition at 19 Hang Buom Street, which has received tens of thousands of viewers since February. The public acclaims the 55 participating photographers for their truthful portrayal of both attractive and not-so-attractive traits of life in the capital city.

The jury awarded two second prizes, three third prizes and three consolation prizes to "Beautiful Hanoi" photos and two first prizes, one second prize, one third prize and four consolation prizes to "Not-so-beautiful Hanoi" entries.

Organizers have decided to hold another photographic competition between now and the end of the year.

VAN HOA

The Lake of the Restored Sword.
Photo: LE CUONG

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The preparatory work for this issue was completed on 15 July 1987.

Front cover:

The First Session of the Eighth National Assembly.

Photo: VNA

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A NEW CUBAN FILM ON VIETNAM

A new documentary by Cuban television film director Senobio Fagez was presented on the national television network of the "Island of Freedom" on 1 July 1987. This 20-minute film is entitled "The Origins of Peace". In it, Vietnamese folk-picture mingle with landscapes and scenes of life recorded by the authors on their journey from Hanoi to Can Tho in the Mekong delta down south. To them are added documents illustrating the historic visit to Annam (the name of ancient Vietnam) by Jose Marti. The national hero and great poet of Cuba visited Saigon — now Ho Chi Minh City — in 1889. This Latin American friend of the Vietnamese people was the first to introduce the Cuban people to Vietnam and its people.

The film makes clear that besides firmly defending their motherland, the Vietnamese people constantly seek to preserve their culture, language, religious beliefs, customs and habits, and in general all the original characters of their nation.

VIET NHAN

VIETNAMESE STUDENTS AT INTERNATIONAL RUSSIAN-LANGUAGE OLYMPIAD

From 22 to 29 June 1987, the Sixth International Russian Language and Russian Literature Olympiad for general-education students was held in Moscow. Such Olympiads are held once every three years. Attending the Sixth Olympiad last June were 500 general-education students from 57 countries.

The Vietnamese team, led by candidate-doctor of educational science Do Dinh Tong, comprised 15 students. This was the third time Vietnamese students attended the International Russian Language Olympiad. They were students from the 10th to the 12th forms of general-education schools, selected by means of two competitions, the first held at city or provincial level and the second at national level. The team spent one month in Hanoi being brought to concert pitch before leaving for Moscow.

All Vietnamese students won prizes: twelve gold medals, one silver and two bronze. Pham Thanh Xuan, a girl studying in the 11th form of the Amsterdam general-education school in Hanoi won 160 marks (the highest award recorded at the competition was 168 marks).

Nguyen Thi Nguyet Huong, a girl 12th-former at the Le Hong Phong general-education school in Ha Nam Ninh province, and Pham Ngoc Long, a 12th-former at the Tran Phu general-education school in Haiphong City, were put on the list of 100 students from all participating countries selected by the USSR Ministry of Higher Education and Vocational Secondary Education and the Pushkin Institute of Russian Language for admission to Soviet universities starting in 1987 — 1988 after they have finished their general education in their respective countries.

KIEN AN

PANORAMA ● PANORAMA

AN ART GALLERY AT THANG LONG HOTEL

Thang Long is the name of Hanoi's newest hotel located in the southwest of the city on the bank of Lake Giang Vo. It has 11 storeys and 86 rooms. Opened in April 1985, it has attracted many domestic and foreign guests.

Early last May the attention of artistic circles, art lovers and foreign visitors in the Capital was attracted by the opening there of an art gallery by the Hanoi Association of Literature and Art and the hotel management.

The works on display and offered for sale are by such artists of repute as Nam Son, Luong Xuan Nhi, Pham Van Don, Dinh Trong Khang, Tran Khanh Chuong, Do Duc, Pham Viet, Hong Lam and others.

Thang Long Gallery has its own peculiar features. The works exhibited are characterized by delicacy of composition and colouring. Woodcuts, which have a long-standing tradition in Hanoi, are done by modern graphic painters with great originality. The traditional styles of folk paintings of Hang Trong in Hanoi and Dong Ho in Ha Bac province have been followed in a creative way.

The opening of a gallery in a hotel helps bring art closer to the public. Here works are displayed and sold through the organization, guidance and management of a responsible art body.

In the near future, the Hanoi Association of Literature and Art will cooperate with the hotel management in bringing more cultural services to the public: decoration of hotel rooms and lounges, organization of entertainments on Lake Giang Vo, and of meetings between Hanoi writers and artists and foreign guests.

HONG SON

At a sales counter.
Photo: TRAN THANH CONG

THE FIRST SESSION OF THE EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The session was held from 17 to 22 June 1987 at Ba Dinh Hall in Hanoi. Present were the 496 deputies elected on 19 April last, among them 91 workers, 105 collective farmers, 49 members of the armed forces, 100 political cadres, 123 socialist intellectuals, 9 democratic and religious personalities, and 19 members of handicraft cooperatives. Of them 88 are women, 55 under 35 years of age, and 70 from various ethnic minorities.

During the session, the National Assembly heard and expressed unanimous approval of an important address by General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh in which he reaffirmed our determination to step up in-depth and comprehensive renovation in all spheres of activity, to incessantly increase efficiency in State administration, to organize and encourage the people in striving to fulfil the tasks set forth by the Sixth Party Congress (See excerpts in this issue).

The National Assembly also elected the highest State organs and highly praised Comrades Truong-Chinh and Pham Van Dong for their services to the revolution as brilliant disciples of President Ho Chi Minh. Those elections of the highest State organs and State leaders reflected the process of succession and renovation and the principle of democratic centralism governing the functioning of the highest organ of State power under the leadership of the Party.

The National Assembly unanimously decided to have the draft Law on Land put before the people for scrutiny and debate.

In the spirit of squarely facing the truth, the National Assembly analysed the report on the socio-econmic situation presented by the Council of Ministers and proposed measures to be carried out by the Government in the guidance and management of the urgent tasks to be tackled in the last six months of 1987 (See article "Economic Tasks for the Last Six Months of 1987" in this issue).

Speeches were delivered by deputies, expressing the thoughts, opinions, and aspirations of their constituencies.

STATE ORGANS OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM ELECTED BY THE EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON 17 AND 18 JUNE 1987

1. The State Council

President: VO CHI CONG.
Vice-Presidents: NGUYEN HUU THO, HUYNH TAN PHAT, LE QUANG DAO, NGUYEN QUYET, DAM QUANG TRUNG, (Mrs.) NGUYEN THI DINH.
General Secretary: NGUYEN VIET DUNG.

2. The National Assembly

Chairman: LE QUANG DAO.
Vice-chairpersons: TRAN DO, HOANG TRUONG MINH, HUYNH CUONG, PHUNG VAN TUU, (Mrs.) NGUYEN THI NGOC PHUONG.

3. The Council of Ministers

Chairman: PHAM HUNG.
Vice-Chairmen: VO VAN KIET, NGUYEN CO THACH, DONG SY NGUYEN, VO NGUYEN GIAP, NGUYEN KHANH, NGUYEN NGOC TRIU, NGUYEN VAN CHINH (alias Chin Can), DOAN DUY THANH, TRAN DUC LUONG.
General Secretary: NGUYEN KHANH.

4. The National Defence Council

Chairman: VO CHI CONG.
Vice-Chairman: PHAM HUNG.
Members: LE DUC ANH, NGUYEN CO THACH, MAI CHI THO.

5. The Council of Nationalities

Chairman: DAM QUANG TRUNG.

6. The People's Supreme Court

President: PHAM HUNG.

7. The Supreme People's Prosecution Office

President: TRAN QUYET.

SHORT BIOGRAPHIES OF SRV STATE LEADERS

VO CHI CONG
President of the State Council

Vo Chi Cong was born on 7 August 1913 in Tam Xuan commune, Tam Ky district, Quang Nam — Da Nang province.

He began his revolutionary activities in 1930 as a member of the Communist Youth Movement. In 1935, he joined the Indochinese Communist Party. In 1940, he was elected Secretary of the provisional Party Committee of Quang Nam — Da Nang and did Party work in the area extending from Quang Nam — Da Nang to the southernmost part of Central Vietnam. In 1943, he was arrested by the French colonialists, sentenced to life imprisonment, later commuted to 25 years in prison, and deported to Buon Ma Thuot in the Central Highlands.

In March 1945, released from prison, he resumed his revolutionary activities. He was head of the Insurrection Committee in Quang Nam — Da Nang in the period leading to the August 1945 Revolution.

After the August Revolution he was political commissar of Regiment

(Continued on page 13)

PHAM HUNG
Chairman of the Council of Ministers

Pham Hung was born on 11 June 1912 in Long Ho commune, Chau Thanh district, Cuu Long province.

He started his revolutionary activities in 1928 in the patriotic youth and student movement and the League of Communist Youth.

In 1930, he was admitted to the Indochinese Communist Party and did Party work at the commune, district, then provincial levels in My Tho province. In 1931, he was arrested by the French colonialists and sentenced to death, later commuted to life imprisonment, and deported to Poulo Condor.

In 1945, after the triumph of the August Revolution, he was liberated from prison and was elected to the Party Committee for southern Vietnam.

In 1946, he was made secretary of the provisional Party Committee for southern Vietnam.

In 1951, at the Second Congress of the Communist Party of Viet-

(Continued on page 13)

LE QUANG DAO
Chairman of the National Assembly

Le Quang Dao was born on 8 August 1921 in Dinh Bang commune, Tien Son district, Ha Bac province.

In 1938, he joined the Patriotic Youth Movement and was admitted to the Indochinese Communist Party in 1940.

From 1941 to 1945, he did Party work in Bac Ninh, Vinh Yen, Phuc Yen, and Hanoi.

After the triumph of the August 1945 Revolution, he was Secretary of the Party Committee of Haiphong, then of Hanoi.

In 1948 — 49, he did Party work in Hanoi and Ha Dong and was deputy head of the Propaganda Board of the Party Central Committee.

From 1950 to 1978 he was appointed to important posts in the

(Continued on page 13)

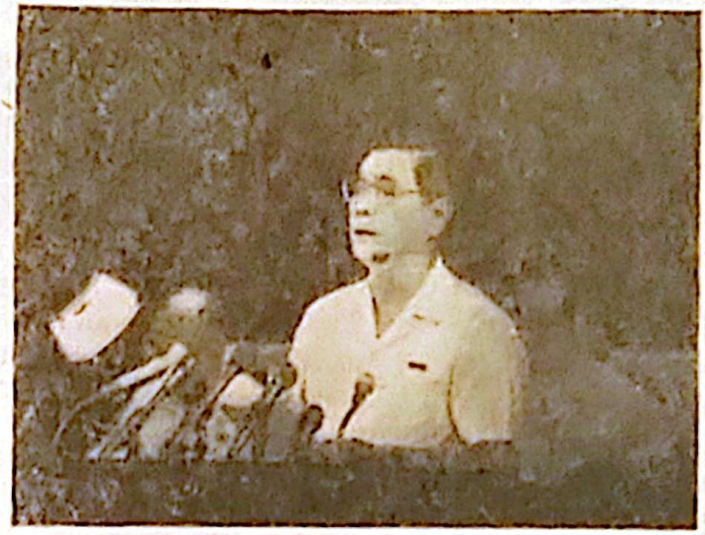
CPV GENERAL SECRETARY NGUYEN VAN LINH'S ADDRESS TO THE FIRST SESSION OF THE EIGHTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(17 June, 1987)

Editor's Note: Upholding "Deep-going and all-round renovation in all fields of activity" in his address, General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh opened the first session of the Eighth National Assembly of the SRV, which had been elected on 19 April 1987.

The first part of the address reaffirmed the resolve to renovate all fields of social life, a process which had begun at the Sixth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam, held in December 1986. It then reported on the recent official visit to the Soviet Union by a high-level delegation of the CPV headed by Nguyen Van Linh.

Following are excerpts from its second part. Subtitles are ours.



Broad and Full Exercise of Socialist Democracy

In the spirit of complete renovation advocated by the Sixth Party Congress, the Eighth National Assembly will renovate its work in a radical way in order to accomplish the glorious mission entrusted it by our people. In this respect, I think that the pivotal question on which we should concentrate all our energies and efforts, as pointed out in the Congress Resolution, is to increase the efficacy of State administration. This is the prime requisite for ensuring Party leadership over the whole of society and the exercise by the working people of their right to mastery according to our system in which the Party is the leader, the people the master, and the State the administrator.

The foremost condition for raising the managerial efficacy of the socialist State, first of all the National Assembly, the State Council and the People's Councils at all levels, is to promote broad and full socialist democracy. This is the essential element for the renovation of political and economic thinking in our country at present. Socialism has two major advantages over all other social systems. One is the high level of organisation and concentration arising from the system of public ownership of the means of production. The other is the vast potential for national construction and defence generated by the emancipation of the working masses, who become the real masters of society and of the country. If both these sources of strength are simultaneously turned to account we shall be invincible. In their dialectical unity one cannot fail to perceive that the main basis and the deep-lying origins of the strength allowing us to preserve and develop our revolutionary gains lie in the labouring masses. For the revolution is the work of the masses. This truth shines bright and has been fully proved in all stages of the revolution in our country.

(...)

Generally speaking, the voice of the majority of the people essentially corresponds to the truth. Consequently, before any major policy of the Party and the State is put into operation, we must gather the opinions of the population. I have said more than once that the reason why the resolution of the Sixth Party Congress has achieved such perfection is because it is the result of the work of the entire Party and the entire people. Let us give serious thought to that valuable lesson in our future work.

"To regard the people as the roots" sounds like a simple principle which should be readily accepted by all. In practice, it is not a simple matter to act upon it. Is it because once power is in our hands, not a few of us tend to rely on this power and prefer to issue orders instead of seeking to convince the masses, discussing matters with them and encouraging them to act ? Some even think that democratisation may hinder the exercise of centralism and limit the role of power. Those people divorce centralism from democracy and fail to recognize the dialectical unity of the two. Centralism as conceived by them is nothing but bureaucratic and formal centralism. There are many painful instances of violation of the people's right to mastery, and this by every level of authority in the Party and administration, by all elected bodies. Personally I have been receiving every day complaints from different quarters, many of them certainly justified, about abuse of power by responsible cadres who oppress the masses and pursue personal gains and privileges. These cadres have turned a deaf ear to sincere criticism by the masses on more than one occasion. Regrettably, we have been too slow to investigate these complaints and have even, in many instances, passed the matter by.

State power belongs to the working people. It is power by the people and for the people. Therefore, as President Ho Chi Minh said: "President and ordinary cadre alike must show themselves to be worthy and loyal servants of the people". If it stood aloof from the people or above them, our administration would be only a "clay-footed giant". More than anyone else, the deputies to the National Assembly and to the People's Councils at all levels, who have been directly elected by the people, must faithfully and straightforwardly speak for them and courageously defend their legitimate interests. Before casting his or her vote each citizen must have weighed the candidate's merits carefully. As the popular saying goes, "One must choose the right man to trust one's gold to." I know that prior to election day, deputies all met their respective constituencies, listened to their opinions, and made them many promises. But can one be sure that once elected, those deputies will remember and make good on their promises ? It is a well-known fact that quite a few deputies to previous legislatures did not once meet their constituents during their tenures. Of course, they had many excuses to offer for that failure. The people, for their part, simply said: "How difficult it is for the master to meet his servant !"

A representative of the people, at whatever echelon, must bear in mind that he is the bridge linking his constituent with the administration at various levels, and that it is necessary to build a steady two-way relationship between the constituencies and the elected bodies. Thanks to this link the deputies will learn about the voters' wishes and opinions and can report them to the higher authorities. At the same time, they will inform the people of, and explain to them new policies of the Party and the State. Meeting the people and talking with them is always an exciting experience. Ideas directly emanating from the masses are first-hand data, truthful and undistorted, which will help the deputies to think and analyse and make the right kind of suggestions to the higher authorities, thus contributing to the elaboration and perfection of guidelines and policies.

What I said above is one important way to put into effect the principle "Let the people know about, discuss, and do things, and exercise control over their execution". In order for the people to know about things we must make public everything that must be made public. For the people to participate in debates, one must listen to them in a democratic way and accept the right suggestions. For the people to engage in conscious action and generate a truly revolutionary movement, we must respect and defend their legitimate interests. For the people to eagerly take part in control and supervision we must deal promptly with the affairs reported by them, mete out impartial justice, and forbid all vengeful and repressive measures against them.

It is my belief that the forum afforded by the National Assembly and the People's Councils at all levels must be put to better use, in a substantial and effective way. Here the people speak through their representatives and give their views about questions of national and regional import, not only with regard to guidelines, policies and their implementation, but also with regard to the work of the administration, including personnel promotion. Suggestions and proposals of deputies to the National Assembly and

the People's Councils must receive serious attention from the organs concerned. They must be answered and acted upon if proved correct. All important questions under State jurisdiction must be subjected to democratic debate at the National Assembly and the Council of State before official decisions are taken. One must never put elected bodies before a *fait accompli* and expect them to approve it in a passive way.

To Heighten the Role of the National Assembly as a Legislative Body

Another question which deserves our full attention is how to heighten the role of the National Assembly in making legislation and supervising its enforcement.

The Communist Party of Vietnam is the Party in power. It exercises leadership over society by laying down major guidelines and policies, controlling the work of the administration, and making recommendations to the elected bodies in the appointment of capable and worthy cadres to key posts in the State apparatus. The task of the State is to institutionalize the Party guidelines, embody them in laws, policies and regulations, work out plans for socio-economic development, and organize their effective implementation through the exercise of its function as an organ of socio-economic management as defined in the Constitution... In all affairs of the socialist State, the National Assembly assumes a special role: it is the organ of legislation and supervision operating on the basis of the lines and policies of the Party and reflecting the will and aspirations of the people. Our system, in which the Party is the leader, the working people the master, and the State the administrator, can function only through the operation of law and is guaranteed by it. A progressive and disciplined society is regulated chiefly by law, not only as an instrument of coercion but also one of active education. Such a society requires that all citizens, irrespective of their social status and function, live and work according to law. At present, more laws and regulations are still needed to better administer the country. Even when regulations exist on some matter, few people care to know about them. Law enforcement is lax, and little has been done for legal popularisation, and education. This is one of the many reasons behind the present situation: the crime rate has not fallen, discipline is not enforced, and social order is not ensured. If people do not understand the law they might, albeit unconsciously, contravene it. Neither can they exercise their right to mastery in supervising law enforcement by State organs. On the other hand, the struggle against negative phenomena in society must necessarily rely on the people if it is to be successful. Lenin once asked: "Why was lawbreaking so common in Russia although there was enough legislation?" And he gave this answer: "Only with the support of the masses can this struggle (against negative social phenomena) achieve success." Certainly, a good grasp of the law will be a powerful help to the people in their struggle against negative phenomena. The working people must be able to use the law to defend socialist democracy. Only then will our democracy be continually perfected and a stop be put to the degeneration of cadres.

Inadequate law-mindedness has many origins. Our country has long been one of small producers. Human relations in the commune and village are regulated chiefly by customs and social opinion, which may differ from one locality to another.

The feudal State had a number of laws and regulations. But in not a few cases "the king's law must yield to village customs." In colonial times, the laws and regulations of the colonial State were aimed at defending the privileges of a minority of colonialists and feudalists in opposition to the interests of the masses. A section of the population, because of their bad opinion of, and opposition to, the law of the old regime, are hostile to law in general, including socialist law. A number of cadres in positions of power, either under the residual influence of feudal ideology or motivated by their own individualism, consider their personal will to be supreme and place themselves above the law, going even to the length of condoning and shielding legal offences. In addition, the lenient treatment and the condoning of offenders have led people to make light of the law.

The Sixth Party Congress made a careful analysis of this situation and set us the task of administering the country by law. The Congress urged that every citizen, every cadre and Party member, whatever his or her position, should live and work according to the law. In order to administer society by law we must build and perfect our legislation step by step in order to ensure that our State apparatus be organized and function according to law.

What the Party Congress requires in this connection is in many ways related to the work of our National Assembly. We already have a Constitution, the fundamental law of our socialist State. Of late, a number of important laws have been promulgated In fact, legislative work made an important step forward during the tenure of the Seventh National Assembly, compared with earlier legislatures. In particular, it adopted laws on the organisation of the State apparatus, the Penal Code and the Law on Marriage and the Family. Likewise, the Council of State has adopted a number of decrees. However, we are still a long way from a comprehen-

sive and uniform legal system, especially in the field of economic legislation, to say nothing of the need to replace or renovate regulations which have become antiquated, especially those which tend to perpetuate the system of subsidy-based bureaucratic centralism. These are imperative problems. The sluggishness and casual way in which much of our activity is conducted is due in no small measure to the lack of legal criteria and standards. For instance, our Party and State are for broadening our external economic relations. But this policy cannot be fully implemented so long as a law on foreign investments has not been enacted. Likewise, we are actively seeking to put into effect the new mechanism of economic management in which the basic economic unit is to be the centerpiece. But so long as a law on the operations of industrial enterprises has not been elaborated, such operations are still without full legal guarantee.

I wish that the present National Assembly would pay more attention to legislative work. It is time for us to renovate not only our economic thinking but also our legal thinking, to plan our legislative work and lay down a speedier procedure in order to overcome that prolonged stagnation!

Along with the promulgation of new laws, we must see to it that important matters such as the State plan and the major policies submitted by the Council of Ministers to the National Assembly for approval, should reflect more adequately and accurately the opinions of the deputies. This question is the concern of many people. In order to give full play to the wisdom and will of the National Assembly each of its deputies and permanent commissions must have the necessary time not only to carefully study the documents, but also to conduct investigations and collect the opinions of broad sections of the population. The deputies must be supplied with truthful information relevant to the affairs of all State organs. Important questions must be widely publicized through the mass media so that everyone will know about them and may contribute his or her opinions. In this way deputies will have at their disposal much more information which will stimulate their thinking and induce well-grounded proposals. Naturally, this must be followed by free and open debate. What is to be feared is not any differences of opinion which may appear during the debates but an outward appearance of unity followed by divergencies in subsequent action. A resolution based on the views of the majority of the National Assembly is law, a supreme order which must be obeyed by all executive organs. No organisation and no individual, whatever their position and whomever they claim to represent, may delay the implementation, much less change the contents, of such a decision. Power must be closely associated with and guaranteed by efficacy.

However, the elaboration and passage of laws and major decisions, important as it is, is only the first step. The biggest difficulty is how to incorporate those laws and decisions in life and make them the everyday practice of the broad masses of the population. Here the role of the National Assembly is to control and supervise the implementation of laws by all State organs — the Council of Ministers, the Supreme People's Court, the Supreme People's Prosecution Office and the other State bodies — and also in the daily practice of the masses.

In this process the National Assembly will be able to complement and perfect the legal provisions promulgated, discover difficulties and obstacles hindering their implementation, and propose remedial measures to be taken by the administrative authorities concerned. Also through its supervision of law enforcement, the National Assembly, relying on the people, will assess the work of the various State bodies, the competence and integrity of the leading cadres, bring offences to light and punish the law-breakers, be they in positions of power. As the highest representative organ of the people, the National Assembly has full power to question and criticise the Council of Ministers, dismiss anyone of its members found to be unworthy, and prosecute those individuals and collectives guilty of serious wrongdoings.

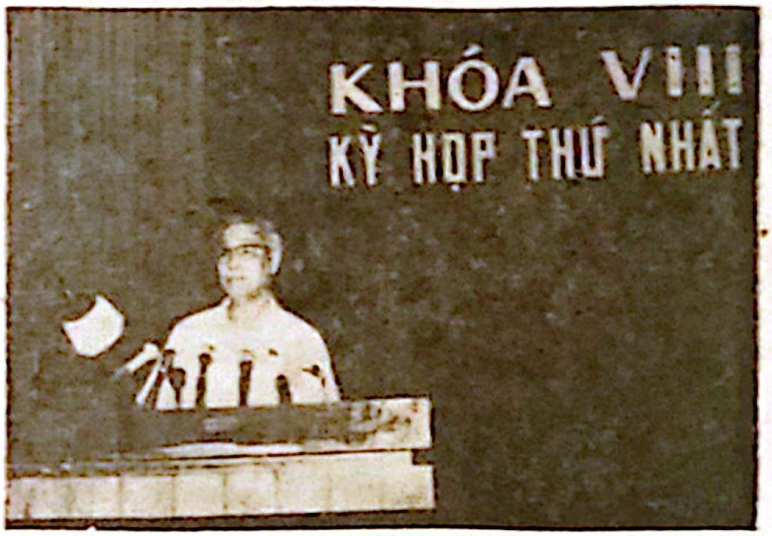
The point is how can that power of the National Assembly be exercised. Facts happening in previous legislatures show that the voice of the highest representatives of the people was not always and in all circumstances respected. Some people accepted the criticisms verbally but later would either do nothing or would act as they saw fit. In not a few instances, written proposals by National Assembly deputies were sent to some State organ or leading official asking them to clarify or settle some matter, only to be filed away and left untouched year after year, allegedly for "study".

This situation cannot be allowed to continue. We cannot allow formalism and bureaucracy to endure indefinitely even in matters dealt with by the highest organ of State power. The National Assembly must be the most representative organ of our country in efficacy of power and substance of socialist democracy. Then it will surely set a bright example for the People's Councils at all levels and for all other organizations. I think that we have at our disposal enough legal provisions, including the Constitution, to serve this purpose. No amendment is needed. What is most urgent now is immediately to set about renovating our style of work and fully and strictly enforcing the existing legal provisions.

(...)

ECONOMIC TASKS FOR THE LAST SIX MONTHS OF 1987

Editor's Note: At the first session of the National Assembly, Vo Van Kiet, Political Bureau member of the CPV and Vice-Chairman of the SRV Council of Ministers, presented the Council's report on the socio-economic situation and the urgent tasks for the second half of 1987. Below are excerpts of the report.



I. PRESENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

[...]

In agricultural production, the 1987 plan devotes nearly 29% of total investments to agriculture, forestry and water conservancy (compared to 24.5% in the 1986 plan). Of this sum, investments in the food programme account for 51%. A much bigger amount of fertilizer, insecticide, fuel, cement, steel, etc., has been apportioned to agriculture, but still falls short of its needs.

The result, nevertheless, has been a fairly good crop of winter-spring rice in the South where both the sown area and per hectare yield were higher than in 1986. According to preliminary figures, per hectare rice yield was 5.66 tonnes in An Giang, 5.12 tonnes in Dong Thap, 4.57 tonnes in Tien Giang, 4.18 tonnes in Hau Giang, 4.45 tonnes in Phu Khanh... Meanwhile, the winter subsidiary crops in the North also achieved high productivity, especially for potatoes. The areas under such short-term industrial crops as groundnut, soybean, jute, and rush, also were larger than in the previous year. Some increase has also been recorded in the number of cattle and pigs.

In the North, although the area under the spring-summer crop is the largest in many years, agriculture has suffered from vagaries of the weather and other unfavourable factors: a mean temperature much higher than is common in this period of the year, rampant pests, whirlwinds and hailstorms in some areas... In spite of intense efforts in many localities to combat pests, they quickly spread over a wide area (estimated at 70% of the cultivated area). This, coupled with the northeast monsoon at a time when the rice plants were in the ear, harmed productivity. Spring-rice production is expected to fall by about 700,000 tonnes compared with the same crop last year and about 1.1 million tonnes below target.

[...]

In industrial production, the plan provides for concentration of raw materials for the making of the main products and for improvement in the supply of electricity, coal and fuel. The light and food industries have made fuller use of the existing stocks and broadened their cooperation with different localities to increase the supply of raw materials. A number of provinces and cities have promulgated policies encouraging small-scale industry and handicrafts. As a result, many branches have been able to keep their normal rate of development. Total industrial output value increased by 8% compared with the first half of 1986: 9.8% for consumer goods and 4.9% for the means of production. Some products have shown substantial increases, such as mosquito netting, towels, bicycle tyres and tubes, electricity, coal, phosphatic fertilizer, cement, etc.

The communications and transport service has made commendable efforts in the transport of coal and cement, especially in the recent drive to move rice from the South to the North to make up for poor harvest.

In capital construction, the planned tempo has been maintained at key projects. For instance, the damming of the Dong Nai river has been achieved ahead of schedule at the Tri An hydro-electric power project and the installation of the first turbine generator is under way. The Hoa Binh hydro-electric power project has received more than two-thirds of the components of the first turbine generator and assembly is being accelerated.

However, production of many essential industrial goods has fallen short of target: cane sugar, textiles, paper, soap and detergents, chiefly due to the shortage of raw materials. Major shortcomings are the low quality of products and the high proportion of substandard items. Consumption of materials and labour per unit is too high. In capital construction, in spite of the readjustment, too many projects are

still being built which are not part of the State plan; materials are scattered in too many places, and a number of key projects are running out of funds.

In the domain of distribution and circulation of goods, in spite of the great efforts of the Council of Ministers, the departments, and the localities, the situation has seen no noticeable improvement.

In the first few months of the year, the rate at which prices rose on the social market showed some tendency to decrease compared with 1986. In particular, after the decision taken by the Council of Ministers to remove all check-points on major roads, the flow of commodities has increased and the prices of agricultural products in many localities, especially in Ho Chi Minh City and other places in the South, have gone down noticeably. However, since May prices have abruptly shot up, especially the prices of food in Hanoi and a number of localities in the North, mainly because of the serious crop failure in the spring and the slow transfer of food from the South.

[...]

In budget management, in the first half of 1987, revenues from the State-run sector of the economy, which provides the biggest share, failed to meet the plan. Tax collection was deficient in the cooperative and private sectors of industry and commerce. Tax rates have not kept pace with the increase in prices. While revenues have increased but slowly, expenditures have shot up in many fields.

The above situation in the price and budgetary fields has had an unfavourable impact on the monetary situation. At present, inflation is being accompanied by the lack of cash in the operations of production and trading enterprises and of the bank.

Price fluctuations have further reduced the real incomes of wage earners. Many services and localities have granted allowances and adopted other measures to ensure normal living conditions for workers and public employees. However, due to the absence of general guidance, snags have developed which have given rise to disparities, in some cases excessive, in the real incomes of public employees in different branches and different localities.

For its part, the Council of Ministers has adopted a number of measures such as provisional monthly allowances, supplementary allowances for teachers and other workers in the education service, for members of the armed forces, etc. Nevertheless, all these measures have failed to make up for the sharp drop in real income. Living conditions for workers and public employees, especially those who have retired or are working in administrative and other non-productive sectors, for members of the armed forces, scientific and technical workers, and for public employees in the northern highlands, have remainned extremely difficult. This is a very urgent problem which is being resolved step by step by the Council of Ministers in conjunction with all departments and localities.

In the past six months, in our external economic relations, we have continued expanding our ties with the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, focusing on the implementation of existing cooperation programmes. Nevertheless, the value of exports has totalled only 38% of the yearly target, almost equal to the same period in 1986. Import value was about 50% of the target and 97% of the figure for the first half of last year.

The Council of Ministers has decided to amend and complement a number of regulations and policies in order to encourage overseas Vietnamese to send money and commodities in assistance to their families and to contribute to national construction. We have also taken steps to expand the tourist industry. These policies have received warm approval from the people. At the same time we are preparing to promulgate policies and regulations aimed at renovating our external economic activities and our import and export operations while elaborating the necessary legal provisions on foreign investments in our country.

On the occasion of the official visit of Comrade General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh to the Soviet Union, our country signed with the Soviet Union a number of agreements on cooperation in the supply of materials and technical equipment for the electric power industry, in light industry, in the production of coconut oil and other coconut-derived products, and in the production of tea. Soviet experts will join us in studying ways to expand cooperation in a number of other domains. This is a new development in both the quality and scope of cooperation between the two countries and is a very favourable condition for us to carry out our three major economic programmes and to take a more active part in the international division of labour.

II. URGENT TASKS FOR THE SECOND HALF OF 1987

In this part, Vice-Chairman Vo Van Kiet laid down the urgent tasks and measures for the production, distribution, and circulation of food; for industrial, small-scale industrial, and handicraft production; and for capital construction. He laid special stress on a problem of special importance, goods distribution and circulation, discussed at the second plenum of the Party Central Committee held in April last.

[...]

On goods distribution and circulation

Here, the urgent task is to achieve the "four reductions" set by the second plenum of the Party Central Committee, namely, reduction of the inflation rate, reduction of budget deficit, reduction of the rate of price rise, and reduction of difficulties in the life of the working people, especially workers, State employees and members of the armed forces.

[...]

a) The number one problem is to reduce the inflation rate

This is a question of extreme urgency and of decisive importance in the effort to stabilise the socio-economic situation. The Council of Ministers is actively directing the responsible departments to work out an overall anti-inflation programme to be implemented step by step. At present, the bank must engage in money transactions and take effective measures to speed up money turnover. The State Bank must fulfil its task as manager of money and credit. The specialized banks (both those already in operation

and those to be set up) such as the agriculture bank, the foreign-trade bank, the bank of industry and commerce, etc., must shift their operations to money transactions in order quickly to draw cash, better serve production, circulation, and life, and contribute to the stabilization of prices and the market.

The bank must tightly manage credit, check the issue of money through bank credits; keep the initiative in credit and interest-rate policy, readjust interest rates selectively among production and circulation units, and step by step abolish usury in society. We must limit and eventually put an end to the issue of money to make up for the budget deficit.

The Council of Ministers has issued an instruction on the broadening of clearing within the State-owned economic sector and also to enforce a strict regime of reward and punishment to production and trading units with regard to the amount of their cash reserve and cash settlement.

The Council of Ministers will decree concrete measures on the practice of economy in production, circulation and consumption. According to calculations by the financial department, if economy measures are applied in production and trading units and in State offices at all echelons, we can reduce this year's budget deficit by several billion *dong*. At the same time, we shall mobilize savings from the population through stronger incentives especially by guaranteeing the value of deposits in the present conditions of price fluctuations.

Parallel with the above policies we shall adopt measures to increase our commodity fund and to achieve a balance between the volumes of money and goods. The Council of Ministers is directing the responsible services to carry out active measures, including domestic procurement and import of materials and commodities, in order to enlarge the retail commodity fund, which is too small compared with the purchasing power of the population. State-owned commodities are scattered in too many places resulting in a divided market, stagnant circulation, and slow revenues. In the home trade department, 50% of the inventory is stocked at district level, more than 30% at province and city level and nearly 20% at the centre. This is an abnormal situation which must be immediately remedied so that the flow of goods can be regulated throughout the country.

b) On prices

Continued price fluctuations have adversely affected production and are the daily concern of the people. That is why, to slow down the rate of price increases and restore order and discipline in this field is a task of utmost urgency.

To encourage food production, the State will readjust the rate of exchange between materials and farm produce as stipulated in economic contracts, first of all the rate of exchange between ureic fertilizer and paddy, in favour of the growers. The prices of paddy and other farm products, both within and outside the economic contracts must be based on mutual consent and must allow the farmers in normal years to cover their production costs and have some profit as well.

With regard to industrial goods, the enterprises must deliver them on schedule and according to contracts, and must not hold them back in anticipation of a rise in prices. Sale prices must ensure reasonable profit for the factory and revenue for the State budget right at that stage. No profits should be made out of price disparities. On the basis of careful calculation of production costs we must firmly direct the management of enterprises, strive to reduce production costs, ensure normal living conditions for the workers, and increase the profits of the enterprises while keeping sale prices at reasonable levels.

With regard to the retail prices of consumer goods, the Secretariat of the Party Central Committee and the Council of Ministers are directing departments and localities to maintain for a certain period the present level of commercial prices which has taken shape in provinces and cities since the end of April 1987. The retail prices practised by the trade services must ensure the interests of the producers and consumers as well as those of the State, and help bring down market prices, struggle against speculation and smuggling, and abolish negative phenomena in goods circulation. On the basis of prices set by the central Government, the People's Committees in provinces, cities, and special sectors shall determine the level of retail prices in their localities, which prices shall not exceed the price level which has taken shape since the end of April 1987. Naturally, we shall have to readjust a number of prices in conformity with the evolving purchasing power of the *dong* and the supply-demand relationship, but the utmost caution should be observed when doing so.

c) On wages and living conditions

A nagging question is the continued shrinking of the real wages of workers, public employees and members of the armed forces. The rural population, in areas hard hit by natural calamities, is also meeting with great difficulties.

Inspired by a full sense of responsibility toward the living conditions of the people, the Council of Ministers and the People's Committees at all echelons must adopt comprehensive measures in the production, circulation and distribution of goods in order to improve this situation. They must create favourable conditions for workers and public employees to develop their household economy and do sidelines, step by step readjust their wages and gradually stabilize their living conditions. This must be done in an active and steady manner consistent with the progress in production, the possibilities of the budget and the balance between the volumes of money and goods. This is an extremely difficult task.

d) On the activities of the financial service

Pending the adoption of an overall financial policy in the spirit of the resolution of the 6th Party Congress, we must immediately take drastic measures to increase revenues and reduce expenditures and cut down the budget deficit, a crucial condition for stabilizing the socio-economic situation.

In order to increase budget revenue, it is necessary first of all to increase earnings from State-owned enterprises by reducing production costs; collect all taxes

VO CHI CONG ...

(Continued from page 5)

93. From 1946 to 1954 he was appointed to successive important posts in several provinces of Central Vietnam. In 1954 he went to Viet Bac (Northern Vietnam) and became a member of the Land Reform Committee. In 1954 he returned to the Fifth Zone (Central Vietnam) and was deputy Party secretary of the Fifth Zone.

In 1960, he was elected to the Party Central Committee and was appointed Secretary of the Party Committee of the Fifth Zone. In 1961, he was deputy secretary of the South Vietnam Bureau of the Party Central Committee. From 1962 to 1975, he served in successive senior posts in the liberated zone of South Vietnam, and was one of the leaders of the war of resistance to the US imperialists and their henchmen in that part of our country.

In 1976, he was elected to the Sixth National Assembly and was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Sea Products.

Also in 1976, he was re-elected to the Party Central Committee and appointed member of the Political Bureau. In 1978, he was Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Minister of Agriculture, and head of the Committee for Agricultural Transformation in South Vietnam.

In 1982 and in 1986, at the Fifth and Sixth Party Congresses, he was re-elected to the Party Central Committee and its Political Bureau, and was some time member of the Secretariat. He was elected to the Seventh and Eighth National Assemblies and repeatedly re-appointed Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers. ●

PHAM HUNG...

(Continued from page 5)

nam, he was elected to the Party Central Committee.

From 1952 to 1955, he was appointed to successive important posts in the South Vietnam Bureau of the Party Central Committee.

In 1956 he was elected to the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee and was appointed head the Central Commission for National Reunification.

In 1958, he was concurrently member of the Party Central Committee's Secretariat and that same year was appointed Deputy Prime Minister.

In 1960, at the Third Party Congress he was re-elected to the Party CC, and its Political Bureau, and was re-appointed Deputy Prime Minister.

From 1967 to 1975, he led the war of resistance in South Vietnam as Secretary of the South Vietnam Bureau of the Party Central Committee and Political Commissar of the South Vietnam Liberation Armed Forces and, in its final stage, Political Commissar of the Ho Chi Minh campaign which liberated South Vietnam.

At the Fourth (1976), Fifth (1982) and Sixth (1986) Congresses of the CPV, he was re-elected to the PCC and its Political Bureau. From 1976 to 1986, he was Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers and in 1980 was concurrently Minister of the Interior.

He was elected to the Second, Third, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth National Assemblies. ●

LE QUANG DAO ...

(Continued from page 5)

General Political Department of the Vietnam People's Army. He was Deputy Political Commissar of the Dien Bien Phu campaign (1954) and member of the high command of the Highway 9 — Khe Sanh campaign (1968), the Highway 9 — Southern Laos campaign (1971), and the campaign to liberate Quang Tri (1972). He was made a Brigadier General in 1958 and a Major General in 1974.

In 1960 he was elected alternate member of the Party Central Committee, of which he became a full member in 1972.

At the Fourth Party Congress in 1976 he was re-elected to the Party Central Committee and was made a member of the Secretariat.

At the Fifth Party Congress in 1982 and the Sixth Party Congress in 1986 he was re-elected to the Party Central Committee and was also a member of the Secretariat from 1982 to 1986. In 1984 he was appointed head of the Science and Education Board of the Party Central Committee and was also in charge of mass agitation and nationalities work.

At the Second Congress of the Vietnam Fatherland Front in 1983 he was elected to the Presidium of its Central Committee. ●

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according to the regulations now in force, avoid granting indiscriminate tax exemptions and reductions while refraining from all tax collections outside State regulations. With regard to tax rates which have become obsolete, the localities shall report to the central Government and propose readjustments.

Concerning the reduction of expenditures, we must resolutely enforce the ceiling put on total investments in capital construction, at both the central and local levels, as provided for in the State plan. We must urgently subject all economic activities to cost accounting in order to gradually eliminate all subsidies in production and trading. All services and localities must immediately implement the decisions of the Party and the State on the reduction of administrative spending, the administrative staff, and the personnel not directly engaged in production. We must take drastic measures to end the widespread and serious waste now rampant in all production and trading units, in almost all branches and at all echelons. The Council of Ministers is working out concrete economy regulations in production, trading, and consumption, first of all concerning the reduction of spending in the State apparatus. These are to be enforced in the coming months.

[...] ●

A LEGITIMATE ASPIRATION: PEACEFUL REUNIFICATION FOR KOREA

On June 25 this year, the Korean people again began a "Month of Struggle Against US Imperialism for Peaceful Reunification of the Country". On that day, 37 years ago, the USA launched a criminal war of aggression against the Korean people which led three years later to a bitter defeat for Washington evidenced by the signing of the Panmunjon Agreement on July 27, 1953. Subsequently, however, the danger of a long partition of Korea became ever more visible. South of the 38th parallel a militaristic regime was set up, ruled by successive notorious dictators, Syngman Rhee in the past and Chun Doo Hwan at present. They have been protected by US imperialism and backed by reactionary forces in Northeast Asia. By now the southern part of the Korean peninsula has become a real fortress with over one million well-equipped South Korean troops whose armaments include nuclear weapons. Following a series of bilateral agreements signed between Seoul and Washington, more than 40,000 US troops are stationed here. They have carried out yearly joint manœuvres with South Korean troops on an ever larger scale and using ever more sophisticated weaponry. Despite increasing protests in the US, Washington has equipped its troops in South Korea with 180 new types of war means: nuclear missiles, amphibious armoured cars, F. 16 fighter-bombers, binary chemical weapons...

Faced with this situation, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has striven to build a strong economy and national defence while advancing repeated proposals for a peaceful reunification of Korea. These, however, have been fiercely opposed by the South Korean side. For its part, Washington has more and more clearly revealed its determination to maintain an anti-Communist regime in this part of Korea. In May last, US—South Korea high-level meetings were held in Washington at which all politico-military commitments between the two sides were reaffirmed and strengthened. This was done in the teeth of the rising struggle against the USA and Chun Doo Hwan which was sweeping the whole of South Korea and was particularly shaking Seoul, the Capital. Within 16 days, from 10 to 26 June 1987, an estimated 2,145,000 people turned up in the streets to protest against Chun Doo Hwan, braving the police's bayonets and tear-gas. Eventually, Chun has had to yield to many demands of the opposition, promising to step down as president in February 1988 when a presidential election will be held.

The Korean people's "Month of Struggle" is unfolding in the midst of strong protests against US intervention and vigorous opposition to a cruel dictatorial regime. The Vietnamese people have constantly supported the just struggle of the Korean people for national reunification. Having undergone sufferings due to imperialist aggression and the partition of their country, they deeply sympathize with the Korean people. It is clear that the reunification of Korea is a legitimate aspiration which is drawing sympathy and support from progressive mankind. This reunification is to be achieved through the efforts of the Korean people themselves, in both the North and the South, without outside interference.

FRELIMO IS WINNING

On 25 June 1987, the FRELIMO Party (formerly, the Mozambique Liberation Front) was 25 years old. Its history has been marked with significant milestones, the most important of which being 25 June 1975, when the Mozambican people defeated the Portuguese colonialists after a 13-year hard struggle and set up an independent State.

Inspite of the backward legacy left by colonialism, the Mozambican people under the leadership of the FRELIMO Party have weathered countless difficulties both in national construction and defence. Over the past ten years and more, the US imperialists acting in collusion with the racist ruling circles in South Africa have conducted an undeclared war against the frontline States in southern Africa, including Mozambique. On the border and in remote areas of Mozambique, armed groups of the so-called "National Resistance Movement" have destroyed roads, attacked villages, robbed and murdered people, threatened national security and construction.

Added to enemy action, natural calamities have been a serious challenge to the country's progress.

Facing this situation, the revolutionary State has carried out urgent measures aimed at making the most of all potential natural resources and manpower. First of all, efforts in agricultural development should make the country eventually self-sufficient in food. Initial achievements have also been scored in industry, culture, health care and education.

Of late, a plenum of the FRELIMO Party Central Committee, held in Maputo, reaffirmed the Mozambican people's determination "to continue following the socialist road".

In external affairs, Mozambique has advocated a policy of solidarity with the socialist countries, other countries in Africa, and Non-Aligned countries, and has joined in the common struggle of the peoples of the frontline States in southern Africa against the last stronghold of racism in this region.

Relations between Vietnam and Mozambique have developed finely. The two countries have consistently supported each other in their struggle for national independence and construction. The two official visits to Vietnam by the late President Samora Moises Machel, the loyal son of the Mozambican people, have left the Vietnamese people with excellent impressions.

On the occasion of the 25th birthday of the FRELIMO Party, we wish Mozambique many new successes and hope that its relations with Vietnam will be ever more consolidated and will develop in all respects.

ALGERIA – OUR FRIEND AND COMRADE-IN-ARMS

25 years ago, on 5 July 1962, the Algerian people's eight-year patriotic war of resistance against the French colonialists ended in victory, bringing total independence to the country. The People's Democratic Republic of Algeria was born and embarked upon a period of brilliant development. This was an important event in the national liberation movement in Africa and in the world.

After liberation, the Algerian people under the leadership of the National Liberation Front (FLN) have engaged in national reconstruction and the consolidation of national independence, overcome all trials and hardships and scored ever greater achievements. The oil industry has been nationalized and made to serve the development of the national economy. At present, Algeria produces each year 32 million tonnes of oil, 10 thousand tonnes of petrochemical products, 70 billion cubic metres of gas, 8 billion kwh of electricity, 1.06 million tonnes of cast iron and 990 thousand tonnes of steel. Over the past two decades, 700 State-run enterprises have been built. The State sector of the economy has increasingly expanded and now accounts for 90 per cent of the country's industrial output.

Agriculture occupies an important place in the economy. For the country to become self-sufficient in cereals and other foodstuffs, ever more investment has been put in agriculture by the Government. Annually, Algeria brings in more than two million tonnes of cereals, 340 thousand tonnes of citrus fruit, 120 thousand tonnes of dates, 112 thousand tonnes of olive, 50 thousand tonnes of fish...

Constant attention has been paid to cultural, educational and health-care development. By 1985, 5 million children were attending general-education schools.

Starting from a backward economy — the legacy of colonialism — Algeria has become one of the most developed agricultural and industrial countries in Africa following a series of three-or four-year plans, especially the 1980 — 1984 five-year plan. The people's living standard has improved gradually, and now ranks high in northern Africa.

As the first country in Africa to have conducted armed struggle to gain independence and one of the founders of the Organization of African Unity, Algeria has always actively supported the national-liberation cause and contributed to the safeguarding of world peace and security. As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, it resolutely stands by the peoples of the developing countries in their struggle against oppression, exploitation, intervention, and aggression by the imperialist, colonialist, racist and international reactionary forces. So far, the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria has established diplomatic relations with more than 80 countries in the world and its prestige has continuously increased in the international arena.

As Algeria's comrade-in-arms in the struggle against imperialism and colonialism, the Vietnamese people are elated by the considerable achievements scored by the Algerian people during the past quarter century. We are very pleased with the increasing development of relations of friendship and cooperation between the two countries. Now as before, the Algerian people and Government have constantly given effective support to the Vietnamese people's effort for national reconstruction and defence, and to the three Indochinese countries' initiatives aimed at turning Southeast Asia into a region of peace, stability, cooperation and development. The Vietnamese people highly value this precious support.

TEN YEARS OF VIETNAM–LAOS COOPERATION

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the People's Democratic Republic of Laos have recently commemorated the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the two countries (July 18, 1977 — July 18, 1987). The Treaty marks a new development in Vietnam-Laos relationships which have deep historical roots. The two nations not only share a common border but their destinies have had much in common. Standing shoulder to shoulder for over 50 years against aggression and attempt at enslavement by colonialism and imperialism, the Vietnamese and Lao peoples have found themselves linked ever closer to each other.

The July 1977 Treaty is an official and concrete testimony to this special relationship.

Before a football match between the Vietnamese and Lao teams at Hang Day Stadium in Hanoi.

Photo: HONG THU

In the past ten years the twinning of provinces of the two countries has developed apace. Relying on their close geographical positions, the twinned provinces have helped each other in their development. Vietnamese skilled workers and experts have assisted and shared their experience with their Lao friends. In the agricultural field for instance, rice strains suited to hilly areas have been offered by Vietnamese agronomists to Lao agricultural cooperatives. The two sides have also exchanged experiences on the management of agricultural production in regions with a scattered population in Laos at present. The building of a new life, the boosting of medical, cultural and social work at local level are matters of constant concern to both Vietnamese experts working in Laos and Lao cadres coming to Vietnam to learn from our experience. In some contiguous provinces, twinning and cooperation have taken place between districts and even communes.

Economic, cultural and social cooperation has reached the stage of integration and joint enterprise on the basis of voluntariness, equality and mutual advantage. In almost every branch, there has been cooperation and assistance in the spirit of socialism. Many achievements have been scored and useful lessons drawn.

According to preliminary figures, Vietnam has helped Laos work out overall development plans for 19 districts in three provinces: Vientiane, Champassac and Savannakhet; offered Laos a number of poultry and cattle strains and grass strains as well; conducted surveying and designing work for a number of small-scale hydropower stations, water conservation and geological projects; built for Laos 1,350 km of road with scores of bridges in mountainous areas difficult of access; restored a number of Lao towns damaged or destroyed during the war; built 88,000 sq.m. of housing space and a number of brick-and-tile factories with a capacity of between 1.5 to 7 million items a year.

At present, the problem of quality and efficiency has become the main orientation and the constant concern of both the Vietnamese and Lao sides in promoting cooperation. Changes have also been brought to the forms of cooperation. Says Le Hung, acting-Director of the No. 8 Union of communications enterprises under the Ministry of Transport and Communications: "Our Union plans to muster skilled manpower and a large number of machines in works done for our friends so as to achieve high efficiency and quality. At State level long-term plans extending over 5 or 10 years must replace short-term one-year plans. This will facilitate planning at enterprise level. The need is also felt for unified regulations and norms in pricing, materials consumption, account-clearing, and policies with regard to Vietnamese working in Laos. Procedures for the granting of entry, exit, and transit visas to personnel of both sides should also be simplified.

NGUYEN. VINH

THE CALL FROM ULAN BATOR

A consultative meeting of representatives of Communist and workers' parties in Asia and the Pacific was held in Ulan Bator, the Mongolian capital, from July 7 to 9, 1987. The meeting has had worldwide repercussions.

Upholding the watchword "For peace, security and good neighbourly cooperation" and in an atmosphere of international friendship and solidarity, 21 delegations, including Vietnam, discussed urgent questions of our time, especially those affecting the Asian-Pacific region.

The meeting was held at a time when the situation in the world and in the region was experiencing important changes: development of the revolutionary and peace forces; a fairly high rate of growth for the economy of some countries in the region; and a series of complicated politico-social developments resulting from imperialist interference in this important area of the world. The Ulan Bator meeting once again reaffirmed the determination and desire of the nations in the region to live in peace, security and cooperation.

The situation in Asia and the Pacific, the most populous area of the world and one with immense natural resources and an inexhaustible reservoir of manpower, has been made tense and unstable by the regional policy of Washington. The US 7th Fleet continues to receive reinforcements. US military bases in many countries and on many Pacific islands and archipelagoes have been modernized and equipped with nuclear weapons. The Washington-Tokyo-Seoul axis and the military alliances linking the United States to a number of other Asian countries continue to be strengthened.

In the face of such a situation, the Communist and workers' parties participating in the meeting set a series of goals to struggle for and reached unanimity of views on crucial questions: resolute opposition to the US policy of aggression and intervention; building nuclear-free zones; supporting the resolution of differences between nations through peaceful negotiations; establishing a new international economic order, etc.

The participants acclaimed the important initiatives of the Soviet Union, particularly the Vladivostok Statement made on 28 July 1986 by Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. This statement opened up real possibilities for resolving all problems of Asia and the Pacific according to a completely new political thinking.

The Vietnamese delegation was headed by Tran Xuan Bach, member of the Political Bureau and the Secretariat of the Communist Party of Vietnam, who delivered an important speech, in which he analysed the downhill trend of US imperialism on a global scale. Stressing that the aggressive forces in Washington are planning a new strategy in Asia and the Pacific, the "second front" of their effort to oppose peace, national independence, democracy and social progress, he pointed out that the value of trading between the United States and the countries in the area has exceeded that of US trade exchanges with Western Europe. The Vietnamese delegation also exposed the US scheme to take advantage of temporary Sino-Soviet and Sino-Vietnamese disputes to play the "China card" and try to pull China over to the US side. But this plan would fail, it predicted. The Chinese people, heir to a long-standing revolutionary tradition, are well aware that US imperialism is trying to remove socialism from the Chinese mainland and prevent the emergence of a strong and prosperous China.

The Vietnamese delegation proposed an overall solution to the situation in Asia and the Pacific, with three major components:

First, to support the popular movements and State policies in the region which stand for denuclearisation, oppose the deployment of nuclear arms in the region by the United States, oppose the US-Japan-South Korea military alliance and the revival of Japanese militarism and call for a check to the arms race, the limitation and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons in the region, and the adoption of confidence-building measures in the region.

Second, to resolve by political means all conflicts and disputes, respect the right of nations to self-determination, end all interference from the outside and all acts of economic embargo and blockade, establish economic relations on the basis of equality and mutual benefit, oppose exploitation of and discrimination against developing countries.

Third, to establish relations of good neighbourliness and peaceful coexistence among nations, broaden forms of cooperation in economy, science and technology, trade, culture, education and health care among nations in the region.

On the Kampuchean issue, the Vietnamese delegation held that the situation was ripe for a political solution that would ensure lasting peace, independence and sovereignty for Kampuchea, and safeguard the revolutionary gains of the Kampuchean people.

As a Pacific nation and a victim of successive wars of aggression, the Vietnamese people, more than anyone else, yearn for peace and wish to live in freedom and to build an ever more prosperous country for themselves. For this reason, the Vietnamese people demand that the noble and well-grounded ideas set forth at the Ulan Bator meeting be seriously considered by the different political circles in the Asian-Pacific region.

NGUYEN VINH

A DOCTORAL THESIS BASED ON ACTUAL AGRICULTURAL PRACTICE IN VIETNAM

In 1963 Pham Dinh Thai received the degree of candidate-doctor of science from Lomonosov University in Moscow with a thesis on "Relations among anions in the process of assimilation by plants". While studying in the Soviet Union he could make use of advanced methods and modern equipment available in the brother country. What would happen after his return to Vietnam, he wondered. How would he be able to put into practice the results of his research? During the summer, instead of spending his holidays at the seaside, he would go to laboratories in Leningrad, Kiev and Baku to study the effects of micro-elements on plants, animals, and the human body. There he succeeded in giving his work a direction compatible with conditions in Vietnam, and this gave him great pleasure.

But no sooner had Thai returned to Hanoi than the Americans began their air raids on North Vietnam in August 1964 and his barely begun experiments on micro-elements had to be undertaken in a remote upland region of Bac Thai province.

The first plant he chose for his experiments was sorghum. In a shady place he arranged 30 earth-filled pots, some of which contained various doses of micro-elements, and were labelled Mo (molybdenum), Cu (copper), Mn (manganese), Co (Cobalt), Zn (zinc). Check pots contained no such elements. The labels also bore indications of the doses used, as well as the micro-element, e.g., Cu 0.01%, Cu 0.025%, Cu 0.005%, etc.

When deprived of water, the sorghum planted in pots with no micro-elements withered, while in pots containing them the leaves remained green. Thus some micro-elements enhance the resistance of plants to drought.

In foreign countries, such pots can be placed in glasshouses in which temperature and other conditions can be regulated. In that remote upland region of Vietnam, Thai's pots were exposed to rain and sun.

And so when it started raining, Thai and his students would cover the pots with plastic sheets and palm leaves to maintain "drought" conditions. Later they would be again exposed to the sun.

When the biology department was moved from Bac Thai to Ha Son Binh province, the experimental pots which by now numbered in the hundreds were taken across the Red River to the commune of Trung Nguyen, at the foot of Mount Ba Vi, near the Da river. The personnel taking part in the experiments now numbered ten, together with about one hundred students, and Thai decided to extend the scope of his studies, which included soya, green beans, French beans, tomatoes, maize, groundnuts, *dien thanh* (sesbania cannabica) and various leguminous plants. The plants were grown both in pots and in the fields.

It was found that insofar as soya was concerned, the micro-fertilizers stimulated the growth of the plants, which flowered from three to seven days earlier and gave bigger and more beans.

With regard to *azolla pinnata*, the result was truly surprising. Sprayed with two grammes of molybdenum per week, a *sao* (360 sq.m.) would yield 100 kilograms more of this green compost plant. Molybdenum could be sprayed together with insecticides. The village school children took especial pleasure joining in the work, for they could see with their own eyes the results of their labour: only two grammes of a chemical yielded no less than one hundred kilograms more of *azolla pinnata*. It was a real miracle! "Going to the fields with a pinch of micro-fertilizers in our pocket, we return from them with heavy loads of grain," a Soviet agriculturist had quipped.

Soon, over 30 general-education schools in Vinh Phu, Ha Son Binh, Hai Hung, Thai Binh and Thanh Hoa provinces followed the example of Trung Nguyen school in spraying their ricefields with micro-fertilizers. Their number soon reached 98.

On the strength of the experiments conducted in the country, Pham Dinh Thai wrote a doctoral thesis: "Micro-elements and the effects of micro-fertilizers on the main kinds of soil in Vietnam." The 254-page thesis was successfully defended on 13 May 1984 at Lomonosov University in Moscow where twenty years ago Pham Dinh Thai had received his candidate doctor of science degree. In the modern laboratories of this university, Thai analysed over 300 soil and plant samples he brought from Vietnam. He was able to determine the quantities of micro-elements contained in the samples and the quantities the plants would need.

A few months after his return to Vietnam, Professor doctor Pham Dinh Thai helped Lang Giang district (Ha Bac province) to experiment with the use of micro-fertilizers. His report summing up two years (1985 — 1986) of work at Lang Giang shows heartening results: in the experimental plots, yields for rice increased by from 4.2 to 25.9% (according to the formulae used), that for soya by from 7 to 12%, and that for groundnuts by between 4 and 15%.

HAM CHAU

A HANDICRAFTS TRAINING-SCHOOL IN THANH HOA

Ceramics making in Cam Thuy, Thanh Hoa province.

Photo: TRONG NGHIEP

Mother-of-pearl inlaid and lacquered arm-chairs decorated with traditional motifs (landscapes, palaces and pavilions, scenes of rural life), modern-style cabinets, glossy tables and chairs: those are some of the articles made at the school and offered for sale at reasonable prices. The school also makes such articles as jute rugs, rush mats, bamboo and rattan baskets, embroidery and pottery items, chinaware, glassware, curtains and blinds. It can be said that 80% of the models for handicraft products (for local consumption and for export) turned out in the province are designed at this school.

The headmaster and his deputy told me that the function of this school is to train, together with the cooperatives, skilled craftsmen, managers, warehousemen, bookkeepers and statisticians. These skills are badly needed in Thanh Hoa. Every 24 months, the school produces a batch of from 550 to 600 graduates (grade-3 workers on a 7-grade scale). At the school study is combined with practice. Second-year students can already produce marketable articles, the proceeds of which help cover school expenditures and even provide funds for enlargement of the school.

I had visited the school for the first time in 1977 when it was housed in six large bamboo huts built on three hectares of land. Now the brick houses total 7,200 square metres of floor space complete with classrooms, offices, canteens and dormitories, and equipped with machine-tools and other apparatuses. There is also a fish-pond. The complex has been built at the cost of a dozen million *dong* mostly generated by the labour of teachers and pupils.

The school signs contracts under which it supplies government offices, economic enterprises, schools, hospitals and kindergartens, in the province with various pieces of furniture (cabinets, beds, tables, chairs), all well-made and low-priced. The wood is often supplied by the customers themselves, many of whom are so satisfied that they would pay something over and above the prices agreed. The odds and ends left over serve to make "economy-style" chairs, tables, and larders sold at exceptionally low prices.

By combining in this way study with practice the school has achieved four aims:

1. Training skilled craftsmen, with high standards set and strict discipline observed;

Jute carpet weaving.

Photo: BUI TUONG

2. Improving the living conditions of teachers and pupils through earnings from their labour (their kitchen serves better meals than any other communal kitchen in the province);

3. Enlarging the school and buying more equipment;

4. Helping alleviate local unemployment.

The school takes into account the province's economic structure and pays attention to all four regions: for the coastal area where plentiful rush and jute grow, weavers are trained for making mats, rugs, hats, baskets, sandals; for the plain craftsmen are trained in carpentry, glass making, pottery, basketry, embroidery, wood carving, and other traditional occupations; for the highlands, workers are trained to make bricks and tiles on the spot so as to avoid high transport costs and also in carpentry, metal working, brocade weaving, the making of bamboo blinds, shellac, dyes from local materials, etc. The ages of the pupils vary from 14 to 17. Girl weavers are younger. In 1985, the province authorized the districts to set up handicrafts-training centres of their own, with instructors supplied by the provincial school. So besides the 600 pupils studying at the school itself, 550 other students are trained at district handicrafts centres.

Enrolment is geared to the economic development of the province. In each period, particular attention is paid to "vanguard crafts" turning out the most prized articles for local consumption and for export. The students are recruited from among children of public servants, soldiers, workers, members of agricultural, forestry and fishing cooperatives. Attention is paid to achieving a balanced picture among various regions of the province. By 1985, the school had trained about 1,800 workers, who have themselves subsequently trained thousands of craftsmen for 120 cooperatives. Besides, in cooperation with the districts, the school has given training to 4,400 apprentices sent in by various cooperatives.

The Handicrafts School of Thanh Hoa province is one of eight vanguard schools of its kind in the country. However, in view of the present economic development of the province, the number of skilled craftsmen it has turned out is still very insufficient. In 1986, Thanh Hoa had 2,779,000 inhabitants. The province boasts abundant sources of materials for the production of consumer goods and export goods. Each year it produces large quantities of raw materials of various kinds (25,000 tons in 1986), 30,000 cubic metres of timber, 5.5 million stems of *luong* (a large bamboo species) and large quantities of rattan. Clay and lime-stone are found in many places in the province. However, processing facilities are lacking. The province needs more ceramics, glassware, building materials... Some traditional handicrafts have disappeared. So the opening of more handicrafts-training centres in the districts is an urgent matter.

Thanh Hoa plans to increase the production of food crops, consumer goods, and commodities for export. The provincial handicrafts school and training centres in the districts will effectively help in the development of its economic potentials.

THE NGHIA

HAI PHONG
THE CITY OF FLAMBOYANTS

From Hanoi a 100-km drive along Highway 5 amid a landscape of rice-fields and lotus ponds will take you to the port city of Hai Phong.

Hai Phong boasts a large port and many industrial plants and is crossed by rivers and canals. Most of the major streets are laid along river banks and are linked to one another by bridges. The climate is cooler than further inland, with an average annual temperature of 26.5°C. In the city one walks under a canopy of flamboyants and on a carpet of their fallen flowers. Hence the name given by tourists to Hai Phong: "The City of Flamboyants".

Beyond streets crowded with people and lined with shops selling a great variety of goods, you may visit ancient temples and pagodas. At the Hang Kenh *dinh* (communal house) your interest will be attracted by its wood engravings — a

(Continued on page 27)

Coconut palms at Do Son.

Photo: VN TOURISM

DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING IN A HIGHLAND PROVINCE

VAN LUNG

Dac Lac province was a guerilla base during the wars of resistance against the French, then the Americans. Its capital, Buon Ma Thuot, is known for the battle that raised the curtain on the campaign for the liberation of South Vietnam in the spring of 1975. Covering 19,800 square kilometres, the province ranks second in area in the Central Highlands, after Gia Lai — Kontum (25,536 sq. km.) and before Lam Dong (9,933 sq.km.). Before Liberation it had a population of 330,000 inhabitants (average density: 18 per sq. km.), mostly members of ethnic minorities (33,000 households with more than 180,000 people) leading a nomadic life.

The land is rich, with hundreds of thousands of hectares of basaltic soil; and natural resources are abundant. Forests cover almost 1.2 million hectares, with timber reserves approximating 100 million cubic metres, about 70 % of the country's total. The province also has great possibilities for growing perennial industrial crops, like coffee and rubber, and short-term ones, like groundnuts and pulses.

However, agricultural production was far from adequate. To remedy this situation the province soon became a key area for a redistribution of the country's workforce and population.

From 1979 to 1984 large numbers of people moved to Dac Lac from provinces in the delta of the Red River and on the coast, creating many new economic and resettlement zones. In the first year alone, the population of the province increased by 32,000 including nearly 21,000 of working-age. The peak year was 1985 when about 39,000 people joined State farms and agricultural cooperatives.

Along with reorganising production and redistributing the workforce, the province launched an extensive movement against nomadism. People were called upon to give up slash-and-burn farming. Irrigation and rice growing were introduced, and the planting of industrial crops was stepped up in all three economic sectors — State, collective, and family. As a result, there was a quick improvement in living conditions and better management of natural resources.

So far more than 19,000 families with over 100,000 members have adopted new farming practice and another 1,000 or so families with about 6,600 people have joined State farms or logging camps.

By now the population has increased to 611,000 (31 inhabitants/sq.km.). The more than 82,000 new settlers are playing a decisive role in exploiting the province's potentials.

From demographic changes...

The new workforce consists of people experienced in food production and receptive to new farming techniques, people who are inspired by the desire to open new land and work for the prosperity of the country. They are hard-working and value every inch of land. At Chuknia, a new economic zone, people are quite prosperous two years only after its establishment. The inhabitants, among them 1,838 of working-age, have put under rice 512 hectares, 412 of them yielding two crops a year. Per hectare yield is as high as 10 tonnes. They also plant subsidiary food crops on another 372 hectares and are beginning to exploit 12,600 hectares of forest.

Three more districts have been added to the original seven. Of the 118 villages, 13 have been set up recently following the creation of new economic zones, and the settlers have formed 40 agricultural cooperatives and more than 200 production collectives. This new factor has contributed in an important way to the shaping of socialist agriculture in this part of the Central Highlands.

The new demographic structure is marked not only by a sharp increase in the population, but also a vigorous change in the people's political consciousness and in the way they live and work — the result of the creation of a series of agricultural cooperatives, State farms and logging camps. It also shows higher technical and managerial standards.

Many of the barriers that used to stand between highlanders and plain-dwellers no longer exist. Quite a few minority people have become doctors or engineers.

Indeed, were it not for the population movements between the highlands and the plains, it would not have been possible to bring rice yields to seven tonnes per hectare, as in Krong Ana district, or even eight tonnes, as at Quyet Thang cooperative in Buon Ma Thuot. Nor could the State farm at Dray Hling have been built, whose activities embrace food production, sugarcane planting, livestock breeding and fish-rearing.

...to changes in the economic structure

Important changes have taken place in agriculture, the most important being the introduction of intensive rice farming. Thanks to good irrigation the area that lends itself to double cropping has increased from 2,000 to 17,000 hectares. By 1983, the five-tonne mark had been attained by 56 cooperatives and nine production collectives. Five other units had even raised the ceiling to 10 tonnes/hectare. In the district of Krong Ana, an average output of 7.12 tonnes was obtained over an area of 1,420 hectares. Output at Buon Ma Thuot, where 1,457 hectares were under rice, was 6.2 tonnes/hectare.

The progress made by those advanced units, once it has spread to all the 11,000 hectares of winter-spring rice and the 15,400 hectares of late-autumn rice, the main crop of the year, will make it possible for the province to solve its food problem. Maize and groundnuts also hold out great promise. The former can be grown on 20,000 hectares, with an expected average per hectare output of two tonnes; the latter can be planted on 10,000 hectares, with output ranging from 9.7 to 11.2 tonnes/hectare.

The food problem once resolved, the province will be able to concentrate on coffee and rubber, two major export lines. Special attention is being paid to the former. A joint Vietnam — GDR enterprise plans to cover 5,000 hectares with coffee. This will be of great importance to the province's economy.

To ensure an accelerated rate of planting, better care of the crops, and a faster rate of capital construction, a series of steps are being taken, among them a new system of labour recruitment, a new managerial mechanism, and a product-based contract system. Whereas in the period from 1976 to 1980 some plantations took years to yield returns, or failed to attain the required standards, now, thanks to the application of intensive planting methods, no less than 90 per cent of the young trees are growing well. Whereas in 1981 the Vietnam — GDR plantation was extended by only 300 hectares, in 1984 it opened up 800 more hectares.

Industry, particularly in the fields of food processing and the production of consumer goods, has also undergone profound changes. Seven years ago industrial and handicraft output value accounted for only 11.4 per cent of the province's gross social product. Now the figure has risen to 33.3 per cent.

Family fish pond.

Photo: DINH NA

For further socio-economic development, Dac Lac will need, in the next five years, a workforce estimated at 267,000. That means an addition of 240,000 people (three times the number of arrivals from 1976 to 1985) to the present figure of 27,000. The new settlers will come from the plains, in implementation of agreements concluded between the host province and other provinces in the country. ●

PROGRESS IN A HIGHLAND PROVINCE WITH RICH POTENTIALS

Coffee picking.

Photo: DINH NA

Of the three provinces in our Central Highlands, Lam Dong is the smallest in area but has the richest economic potentials. Here the natural wealth, climate and geographical location afford possibilities for development in agriculture, industry and tourism.

All-Sided Economic Development

Self-sufficiency in food is the greatest achievement of Lam Dong since liberation in 1975. Under the US-puppet rule per capita food availability was a mere 45 kg/year; in 1976 it rose to 150 kg/year, and by now is roughly 300 kg/year, the average for the country as a whole. This is due mainly to the development of wet rice and maize through intensive farming, crop multiplication and application of scientific-technical progress.

Pedological and climatic conditions favour the development of a few key industrial crops like coffee, tea and mulberry. From 1976 to 1985, the area under tea rose 2.4 times. At the time of liberation, it was only 5,000 ha, (3,800 ha in Bao Loc district). By concentrating capital and manpower in all three economic sectors: State, collective and family, Bao Loc district alone now has 7,600 ha under tea (1986 figure). In the space of 10 years, the whole province harvested a total of 145,000 tonnes of tea which were processed into 33,000 tonnes of dried tea (21,000 tonnes exported).

The area under coffee has grown 2.6 times. In 1986 alone, 4,000 more ha were planted to this crop. On the basis of international cooperation agreements there will be 15,000 more hectares of coffee plantations by 1990.

Lam Dong has 670,000 ha of forest and forestland (120,000 ha of pine and 250,000 ha of bamboo). The forests are the home of elephants, tigers, wild buffaloes, wild oxen, deer, bears, rhinoceroses as well as many kinds of valuable medicinal plants. Wanton exploitation and the spraying of toxic chemicals in the days of US-puppet rule wrought havoc upon the vegetation. After liberation, the province paid immediate attention to afforestation and planned exploitation, and struggled against forest fires seeking to restore forest wealth step by step. Now Lam Dong

is cooperating with the German Democratic Republic to carry out planning and planting of pine forests.

On the strength of abundant natural wealth and energy from the Da Nhim hydro-electric power station — the largest in the South so far — Lam Dong province has sought to develop small-scale industry, handicrafts and processing industries. In the early eighties, the value of industrial output rose by 4.3% yearly on an average. Processing industries using local materials turn out valuable products: silk, cloth, artichoke extract, caffeine, tea, rosin, varnish, print-in-gink, pigments, sugar, alcohol, spirits, paper pulp, paper, kaolin, chinaware...

Flowers, Tourism, Scientific Research

Da Lat enjoys a temperate climate, with an average yearly temperature of 18°C., a cool weather all the year round, annual rainfall of 1,500 mm. It is an ideal place for vegetable and flower growing. Here a great many kinds of flowers both temperate and tropical species can be grown: orchids, gladioli, carnations, roses, mimosas, cherry, immortelles, pansies... Da Lat roses in particular, extremely fragrant and of many kinds, are highly valued on foreign markets. At home, Da Lat supplies flowers to the whole of southern Vietnam, especially Ho Chi Minh City, Da Nang, Quy Nhon and Nha Trang.

The areas in and around Da Lat are covered with immense pine forests, and dotted with beautiful lakes and waterfalls. It boasts a large number of villas of original design, about 3,500 in all.

For all those reasons, tens of thousands of tourists — Vietnamese and foreigners — visit Da Lat every year to admire the landscapes and enjoy the cool air. On certain days the town plays host to no fewer than 6,000 guests. This figure will certainly increase with the development of hotels and other facilities.

Da Lat also lends itself to scientific research and cultural-artistic creation. Its climate is akin to a temperate one and favours activities such as those being carried out at the Pasteur Institute and the Nuclear Physics Institute. There are also in Da Lat several military academies, colleges and junior colleges, and a recently set-up "creation base for writers and artists" founded by the Ministry of Culture.

Settlers from Hanoi in Lam Dong Province

As far back as 1976, in implementation of a programme for the redistribution of manpower and population on a national scale, young people from Hanoi started going to Lam Dong to build a new economic zone.

Ten years later they had carved out of the wilderness a populous centre with 4,000 families and 20,000 people; 5,400 ha had been reclaimed and grown to food and industrial crops. Within that decade, 25,000 tonnes of food (paddy and equivalent) had been produced. Livestock-breeding had also developed vigorously with 1,200 buffaloes and oxen, 4,000 pigs and 22,000 poultry. Industry, small-scale industry and handicrafts had also developed fairly rapidly with output value totalling 8.5 million *dong* in ten years. The main products included: bricks, tiles, timber, rosin, animal feed, maize-bract carpets for export...

At present, the new economic zone built by Hanoi settlers in Lam Dong can meet the people's minimum needs in electricity supply, means of transport and communications, cultural activities, medical care and education. It boasts a polyclinic and a health station with a total of 80 beds. Its basic and secondary general-education schools now have 300 teachers and 6,000 students (as against 22 and 570 respectively in 1977).

Lam Dong province is still classed as a highland province, with a sparse population composed of many national minorities. "To gradually overcome the disparity in the economic and cultural development of the various regions of our country" is a recommendation put forward by the Communist Party of Vietnam in many of its resolutions. There is solid ground for believing that Lam Dong will make good progress in this respect.

DAO NGUYEN

Da Lat.

Photo: VNA

THE NHA RONG
AN ORIGINAL ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN IN THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS

A communal house in the Central Highlands.
Photo: HOANG CHU

The *Nha rong* is an original kind of house-on-stilts found in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. Against a majestic background of mountains and forests, a *nha rong* will tower above the villagers' houses like a Dam San in ancient legend [1]. Some people think of "a crane standing among hens".

When did the first *Nha rong* appear ? There is no precise answer as yet. Anyhow, when starting a new village, Central Highlanders will always build one first. For them, it is the holiest place and people are more attached to it than to their own houses. Here they worship their ancestors, discuss village affairs and hold major ceremonies. In the evening, they come here to sing and dance or to listen to village elders singing *khan* (epics) and telling *h-mon* (tales). Therefore, to help build and preserve the *nha rong* is regarded as a noble and sacred task for each member of the community. Unmarried young men sleep here at night to guard it.

The erection of a *nha rong* is an elaborate undertaking which requires high technical proficiency. The roof is high and its sloping sides are quite steep. The assembling is completely done by hand. First, the council of elders meets to select the site, as a rule a large open space in the centre of the village. Then, it selects skilled workers. The building materials consist of rattan, elephant grass and wood — all of the best quality. The workers use neither saw nor plane, only axe and bush knife. Yet, thanks to their skill and imagination, they manage to erect large and beautiful *nha rong*. The planks are so carefully joined together that only a keen eye can detect the joints. An interesting point is the absence of tenon and mortise, transverse beam, and vertical column in the interior of such a big structure which will last a hundred years and more.

A big and beautiful *nha rong* proclaims the wealth and might of the village. The Bahnar, Sedang, Jarai minority peoples build *nha rong* which can accommodate more than one hundred people. The floor is 4 — 5m above the ground, the house is 10 — 15m, even 20 m long and 7 — 13 m wide, the roof looks like an axe-blade and is 15 — 17 m high, the gables are triangular and narrow. The main entrance looks to the east to receive plenty of sunlight. This perhaps expresses the people's wish to be constantly infused with the might of the sun-god. The staircase is made of polished planks or consists of a whole trunk with

notches. The roof-top is decorated with plaited-rattan or wooden figures of birds and mammals. Inside, rows of benches line the walls behind jars of alcohol with long curving bamboo pipes stuck into their mouths. In the middle of the house the village elders sit and receive guests. Hearths dot the length of the house, at both ends of which are stored spears, shields, drums, musical instruments including gongs. On the walls are hung hunting trophies: animal hides, elephant tusks, deer horns...

Recently, a few changes have been noted in *nha rong* architecture, e.g. the adjunction of a veranda. In a few areas along the border with Laos, *nha rong* roofs are square with four sloping sides reminiscent of a Khmer pagoda, topped with a pointed wooden calabash-like figure.

Nha rong in the Central Highlands are bound up with the life, thoughts, feelings and social activities of the local people. A *nha rong* is now the cultural centre of the village, one with both modern and traditional traits. A typical one is that in Po Ko village, Dac To district, Gia Lai — Kontum province.

In many respects, a *nha rong* in the Central Highlands is like a *dinh* (communal house) of the *Viet* (the majority people) in the northern plains. Both are large structures built by the villagers to worship divinities, discuss village affairs, hold ceremonies... This shows how the habits and customs of the various nationalities in Vietnam are closely related.

In late 1986 early 1987 a *nha rong* was built near the main entrance to the Lenin Park in Hanoi. Tourists, who cannot go to the Central Highlands, can admire here this original architectural design.

LE CONG HOI

1. In a well-known epic, Dam San is a young hero of tremendous stature and strength and great manly virtues.

HAI PHONG ...

(Continued from page 21)

traditional art of Vietnam. Likewise Du Hang pagoda dedicated to Dame Le Chan — a national heroine living in the 1st century — is an original specimen of Vietnamese religious architecture.

A boat named "Bach Dang" takes tourists along the Bach Dang river where historic naval battles were fought against foreign aggressors in the years 938, 981 and 1288 to preserve the independence of the country.

From the mouth of the Bach Dang river, one may sail to the islands of Cat Ba, Cat Hai, Bach Long Vi... Cat Ba in particular, which covers over 200 sq.km. is like a screen facing the East Sea. Its little coves protected by high cliffs provide safe shelter for fishermen in stormy weather. Ensconced between rocky mountains are sandy beaches lining stretches of amazingly blue water. Here caves are linked by underwater tunnels. The island is dotted with gardens and orchards so much so that writers and poets have likened Cat Ba to a garden where flowers bloom all the year round. The fishermen living on the island are kind-hearted and hospitable folk who may invite you to taste such local delicacies as roast shrimp, grilled crab, oysters, or a savoury fish soup.

For tourists, a visit to the sea resort at Do Son, 20 km from Hai Phong, is a must. White sandy beaches, green mountains, a blue sea, all bathed in sunshine. Tourists may find accommodation in modern hotels and cosy villas nestled amid coconut palms and pines. Van Hoa Hotel is built on a rock protruding into the sea. From here you will have a magnificent view of the blue immensity where fishing boats look like so many little dots.

From Hai Phong you can take a launch to visit Ha Long Bay, a wonder of nature. If you think of taking back souvenirs, the Hang Kenh mill is the place to go. Its woollen carpets with splendid designs have been awarded many prizes at international fairs. At various gift shops you may also buy handicraft items made of coral, tortoise shell, or inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Of Hai Phong you will keep unforgettable memories.

NGUYEN THI LAM

For a trip to Hai Phong
please contact:
VIETNAM TOURISM
54 Nguyen Du Street, Hanoi
Tel: 55963-54674
Telex: 4269 Tourism VT
or the Vietnamese mission
in your country.

VIETNAM AND THE DAY OF THE FIVE BILLION

The Day of the Five Billion is an important landmark in the history of mankind. It highlights men's victory over the forces hindering their multiplication while reminding them that population growth should be in harmony with economic growth and that they should strive to gradually improve the quality of life and promote human civilization.

Vietnam is a developing country with a high population growth rate and very low figures of per capita land area and national income.

Since the sixties Vietnam has tackled the population problem, undertaken a population redistribution and built new economic zones. Family planning began to be practised in the seventies.

In April 1984, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers issued a decision setting up a State Committee for Population and Family Planning under a Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

Thanks to family planning the population growth rate has slowed down somewhat. From 3.6% in 1961 it went down to 2.3% by 1981 but was still 2.08% in 1986.

Now that the world population has reached 5 billion, that of Vietnam is 62.5 million — about 1.2% of world total.

In Vietnam practically nobody wants to be childless and very few wish to have only one child. Most people, particularly in the countryside, like to have three or four children.

However, the average number of childbirths per woman has steadily diminished, from 4.9 in 1979 to 3.8 in 1985. It is only 1.6 in small sections of the population comprising well-educated people.

The Sixth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam held in December 1986 stated in its Resolution: "To strive to reduce the population growth rate to 1.7% by 1990." To this end the following basic measures have been proposed:

— To invest more in facilities for family planning so as to raise the percentage of couples benefiting from them from the present 30% up to 60-70% by 1990.

— To amend State policies and regulations to encourage people to marry late and to have at most two children.

— To make the people, the youth in particular, favourably disposed toward family planning through educational and cultural measures.

Family planning will be given ever greater impulse and urgency. It is estimated, however, that it will take 50 years for Vietnam's population to stabilize around the 105-110-million level. ●

VIETNAMESE CHILDREN WON INTERNATIONAL ART PRIZES

As early as 1956, barely two years after the victorious conclusion of the war of resistance against the French colonialists, paintings by Vietnamese children were sent to competitions held abroad. Ever since then and especially over the past ten years, our children have regularly participated in international painting competitions and have won prizes:

1956:

— One Nehru prize (India)

— Two silver medals in Poland

— Two gold medals and four diplomas of merit in the GDR

1958:

— Two Nehru prizes (India)

1960:

— One gold medal and two bronze medals in Rumania.

— Two official prizes in Great Britain

1962:

— 16 diplomas of merit in Rumania

— Five official prizes in Bulgaria

1968:

— Two gold medals, four silver medals, four bronze medals and 12 diplomas of merit in Bulgaria

1970:

— Two silver medals at the competition sponsored by the Sanka newspaper (India)

1971:

— 100 paintings chosen for an exhibition in Damascus (Syria)

1972:

— Two special prizes at an exhibition in Paris where 140 paintings by Vietnamese children were put on display

— Six medals of the highest category in the GDR

1976:

— Eight "Lidice" prizes (Czechoslovakia)

1978:

— 300 paintings awarded diplomas of merit at an exhibition in the Soviet Union

— One high art prize in Cuba

1979 :

— Seven prizes at the competition "How Will Children Live in the Year 2000 ?" organized by UNICEF

— Twelve high art prizes in India

1980 :

— Six prizes in Hungary
— Eight prizes in India
— Six prizes in Japan

1981 :

— Two gold medals, two bronze medals and two diplomas of merit in Japan

1982 :

— One special prize of the Japanese Foreign Ministry

1983 :

— Two gold medals at the competition sponsored by the review "Soviet Women".

— One special prize at a competition on the theme "Children in the World Defend Peace" held by CIMEA (World Children's Committee)

1984 :

— At the international painting competition for children entitled "Forever Green", held by the Vanguard Pioneer journal (organ of the Ho Chi Minh Young Pioneers' Organization) and the Vietnam Plastic Arts Association, Vietnamese children won nine gold medals, five silver medals, two bronze medals and ten diplomas of merit — the largest number of prizes among the 15 participating countries

1985 :

— Two first prizes in Hungary

1986 :

— Five outstanding prizes and four paintings selected for exhibition in China

"My Hamlet", water colour by Ha Minh Phuong, 11, Ho Chi Minh City. Gold medal.

"Buffalo Fight", water colour by Nguyen Anh Quynh, 11, Hanoi. Silver medal.

— Collective prize at the "Lidice" competition in Czechoslovakia

1987 :

— At the second "Forever Green" international painting competition for children, Vietnamese children received five gold medals, twelve silver medals, thirteen bronze medals and sixteen diplomas of merit (15 participating countries).

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A MAN IN HO CHI MINH CITY

A successive sequences of documentary films present to my eyes the huge hulls of American aircraft-carriers, I suddenly feel the powerlessness of an ordinary man facing tremendous machines of death. I picture to myself fighter-aircraft taking off from their decks, flying to their targets in an accurately-plotted course following some order from somewhere in the White House and finally opening their bomb bays, from which bombs start falling like heavy drops of water.

Does the strength of a man amount to anything in the face of the lethal power of such a huge machine? And yet, a man, now of middle age and living in Ho Chi Minh City, at one time took on single-handedly a 16,500-ton aircraft-carrier of the US Navy. His name is Lam Son Nau.

I was startled to hear the siren of a police car on this green islet in the Zoo of Ho Chi Minh City. What was happening in this world of mammals and birds? I asked myself, and looked across at Lam Son Nau. He smiled reassuringly and said: "It's only a monkey of ours. Its howl sounds quite like the shrill noise coming from the siren of a police car, doesn't it?"

Queries came to my mind: did the monkey howl because it was an instinct it had inherited from its ancestors, or because it had been trying to imitate the noise of a police car siren? Anyhow, as if to answer the monkey's howl, a hubbub arose all around. The Zoo was filled with the songs of birds, the bass voice of elephants, the giggles of monkeys. I suddenly had the impression of standing in the middle of a tropical jungle. The illusion was reinforced by the rustling of palm leaves and the smell of bindweeds and lotus flowers wafted by the breeze from the nearby pond.

The passing impression was quickly dispelled by the ring of a telephone. (Do telephones ring in a jungle?). Lam Son Nau, the vice-director of the city Zoo, picked up the receiver, spoke a few words into it, and resumed the conversation.

Prologue

Like his father before him, in 1962 Nau became a worker in the port of Saigon. He had been engaged in clandestine revolutionary work for some time and had got this job at the bidding of his patriotic organization. He became a scout for the revolution. American ships loaded with weapons frequently called at the port. The liberation fighters were in great need of weapons. The 25-year-old scout gathered the necessary information about the arms depots and contributed to supplying the patriotic forces with more rifles and grenades.

One year later, he was sent to the liberated zone to attend a training course. For if a revolutionary should lack the necessary military instruction, if he was not conversant with the principles of underground work, if he didn't know how to shake off a "tail", his chances of failure would increase many times over. One should not make light of the puppet police in south Vietnam although they were contemptuously called "White Mice" by the people, owing to their white uniforms.

Nau learnt quite a few useful things during his three months of training: how to use various kinds of weapons, how to handle mines and explosives, how to stay a long time under water, how to get the upper hand of one's adversary in hand-to-hand combat.

Subsequently Nau left his job at the port but the group of port workers he had organized continued their activities and the necessary information kept flowing to the patriots.

A 'Miss

Slowly and cautiously the aircraft-carrier sailed upstream along the Saigon river in the direction of the port. Lam Son Nau looked at the steel monster for a thoughtful moment, and looked at his watch.

"No sailing schedule can be worked out," he said to himself. The flattop always appeared at unexpected moments. Only a small circle of high officials knew about its timetable. Even the fact that the aircraft-carrier was now operating in Vietnamese waters was carefully concealed from the world. Nau thought to himself: "If only we could blow it up when it is at anchor in Saigon! This will be made known to the world by the press correspondents! And this will also be a stern warning to Washington!"

Starting in the autumn of 1963, Nau thought hard about a scheme to blow up the American ship. But it was a very tough nut to crack. The flattop was under specially close guard each time it called at Saigon. No Vietnamese could approach it. Checkpoints on all land routes into the harbour operated without a loophole. On the river, police launches kept up continuous patrols and fishing boats were not allowed anywhere near the area where the aircraft-carrier was moored.

Eventually, however, Nau opted for the "river route". He had laid hands on an old map of the city sewer system. In the rainy season the large amount of rain water is discharged into the river by means of large underground channels, one of which leads to a place in the river close to the harbour. There it opens under a wharf, whose underside is like an arched roof. At low tide, a small canoe can glide under this vault undetected. From the edge of the wharf to where the flattop was at anchor the distance was only a few dozen metres. Nau could cross it by swimming under water. There was a small obstacle, an iron door closing the end of the channel, but

Nau thought he could open it in a matter of minutes by picking its lock.

On 30 December 1963, Nau's team received news of the aircraft-carrier's arrival. It was anchored at its usual place. Two mines, each weighing fifty kilograms, were loaded onto a sampan which was to be rowed to the entrance to the channel network. Nau and one of his comrades took the paddles.

Everything was done as planned. The two mines were attached to the hull of the ship, not without tremendous effort. It was not easy to move such weights over a distance of several dozen metres under water.

Back to base, Nau and his friends waited. Alas, at the appointed time, no explosion occurred ! What happened ? Had the mines been discovered ? Or had there been some technical fault ? If so, the mines must be removed before they were discovered, for if that should happen, there would remain no possibility of the attempt being renewed. Nau decided to go back to the ship, even if there was possibility of an ambush. Not a single ray of hope should be passed by.

The mines had not been discovered and there was no ambush. Only much later did Nau learn that the damp had damaged the batteries which should have detonated them.

I could well imagine his trip back with the mines, swimming in the greyish-brown, turbid waters of the Saigon river, the possibility being still present that the mines could explode at any moment. What drove him to confront and overcome such a trial ? A spirit of self-sacrifice ? A sense of duty ? Or, more simply, an overwhelming love for the land where one was born, grew up, and which one calls the Homeland ?

To my query, Nau answered :

"At that time, no such thought occupied my mind. I only felt the tremendous weight which I had to carry. I could not breathe under water and my chest seemed to be about to burst. The only thing I thought of was that the mines had to be taken back to base to be put in working order. They would be used on another occasion, which I was sure was bound to come."

The second occasion...

A friend of Nau's who worked in a service regulating river traffic warned him that the American ship would call at the port in 12 hours' time. No time was to be lost in making the necessary preparations. Unfortunately, the other members of his team were all away on various missions. The only hand available was a young man named Hung, who had only recently joined the organization and was without experience. Nau decided to act nonetheless with Hung as his assistant. They loaded the mines onto their carefully-camouflaged boat and started from the opposite shore of the river. Twenty minutes later they arrived in view of the lights of the harbour and their dim deflections in the river. Further away was the huge, threatening bulk of the flattop lighted by a dozen spotlights. Nau outlined to his young companion his plan of attack. Hung was dumbfounded by its daring character. His eyes shifted uneasily from Nau's skinny body to the steel monster in the distance. Nau patted his shoulder reassuringly :

"Don't worry," he said. "I've been lying in wait for it for nearly a year now. I know we can get it."

Finally they arrived at the entrance to the network of underground channels. Although they were burning with impatience Nau and Hung worked in a slow, steady and cautious manner. They hid their boat and took the mines. They travelled through the channel to the edge of the wharf, opened the iron door, boarded a small canoe kept ready there, and availing themselves of the low tide, glided under the arched underside of the wharf. When they reached the far edge of the wharf, Nau began acting single-handed. Swimming under water he took the mines to the ship and clamped them onto its hull. Everything must be done before the tide began to rise, for then it would be impossible for them to take their canoe back to the entrance to the channel.

Everything was completed on schedule. By 2.50 in the morning they were back to base. They heated a pot of cold rice and were about to start eating when a tremendous explosion shook the whole area. At 3 in the morning of 2 May 1964, with a 10 square metre hole torn in its body, the American aircraft-carrier slowly went down.

At 6 in the morning, local time, the news was broadcast over the BBC and other stations in the world.

Conclusion

"I am pleased with my present work," Lam Son Nau said. "The Zoo is a source of joy not only to the children but also to their parents. They look so happy as they watch their children following with ecstatic eyes the meal of an elephant or the acrobatics of a monkey. The simple daily occupations of a Zoo manager I find more satisfying than what I did during the war years. My wish is that these peaceful days would continue and that children would never know war. In my years at the Zoo, I have discovered many things about the world of children."

(...) As a documentary sequence presented a new hostile product of the American cinema — Superman Rambo, a new idol of Hollywood, born of the imagination (or the fanaticism ?) of Sylvester Stallon — I thought to myself : how divorced it is from real life ! Real life has been completely different : the shameful flight of the Americans, the victory of the Vietnamese people. No "Green Berets" could stand in the way of history when it was being made by "ordinary" people. Like Lam Son Nau. This man is no impressive athlete : he is an unprepossessing, thin man, the father of six boys and girls, vice-director of the Zoo of Ho Chi Minh City — the favourite amusement place of Vietnamese children.

Evgeni Leng.
Special Correspondent of NOVOSTI
in Ho Chi Minh City

CHRONOLOGY . CHRONOLOGY

(15 June — 14 July)

JUNE

17 — 22. Hanoi: Opening of the first session of the Eighth National Assembly (See article on page 4).

17 — 26. A delegation of the Industrial Board of the CPV Central Committee led by its deputy-head Nguyen Bich pays a visit to the Soviet Union.

19 — 25. A CPV delegation led by Tran Quoc Huong, Secretary of the Party Central Committee pays a friendship visit to the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and attends the National Congress of the Yemeni Socialist Party.

19 — 26. A delegation of the General Political Department of the Vietnam People's Army headed by Lieutenant-General Nguyen Quyet, Secretary of the Party Central Committee and head of the Department, pays an official friendship visit to the Soviet Union.

19 — 29. At the invitation of the CGIL trade-union and the Federation of Cooperatives in Emilia-Romagna, a delegation of Binh Tri Thien province headed by the president of the provincial Federation of Trade Unions, Le Viet Tam, visits Italy.

Minutes on the strengthening of friendly relations, trade, economic cooperation, and tourism are signed between the two sides.

20 June — 2 July. Moscow : Opening of an exhibition on Vietnam's export goods. On display are consumer goods, farm products, and art and craft products such as chinaware, rattan goods, wooden furniture... from 11 export companies in Vietnam.

21. *Hanoi:* Closing of the second national art and craft exhibition-fair. Nearly 200,000 people and 24 foreign delegations visited the exhibition. 728 products are awarded prizes, including 184 gold medals. Ho Chi Minh City tops the list with 45 gold, 48 silver and 71 bronze medals.

22 — 29. A Vietnamese team attends the Sixth International Russian Language Olympiad held in Moscow (see article on page 2).

23 — 26. Hanoi: Holding of a seminar on Red Cross work in 1987 under the joint auspices of the Vietnam Red Cross and the International Red Cross.

24. *Hanoi:* Holding of a ceremony to mark the reception of 36 tons of goods worth 2 million *forints* in aid from the Hungarian Committee for Solidarity with the Vietnamese People.

29. *Hanoi:* The Council of Ministers meet to work out a programme for the second half of this year, aimed at implementing the tasks set forth in the Council's report to the first session of the Eighth National Assembly.

JULY

4. A Party and State delegation of Vietnam, headed by Vo Nguyen Giap, member of the CPV Central Committee, and Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers, arrives in Algiers to attend the celebrations of Algeria's 25th Independence Day (5 July 1962 — 5 July 1987).

6 — 8. A delegation of the Indian Ministry for External Affairs led by Minister of State K. Natwar Singh pays an official visit to Vietnam.

6 — 9. Sofia: Vietnam takes part in the Conference of Deputy Foreign Ministers of the socialist countries in preparation for the 42nd session of the UN General Assembly.

7 — 9. Ulan Bator: Vietnam attends the consultative meeting of representatives of Communist and Workers' parties in the Asian-Pacific region.

9. At the invitation of the Soviet Union's Committee for Sports and Physical Education, a team of 22 young Vietnamese footballers tours the Soviet Union.

9 — 10: Five Vietnamese students attend the 18th International Physics Olympiad held in the German Democratic Republic. Ho Si Mau Thai is awarded a third prize and another three students receive consolation prizes.

10 — 11. Six Vietnamese students attend the 28th International Mathematics Olympiad held in Cuba. All of them won prizes (one second prize and five third prizes).

The Vietnamese team as a whole ranks 11th among the 42 participating teams.

11. Hanoi. Holding of a meeting on the occasion of the Day of the Five Billion by the Vietnam Committee for Population and Family Planning (See article on page 28).

14. Hanoi. Holding of a symposium on "The Alliance of the Three Indochinese Countries in Fighting and Construction" by the Centre for Asian-Pacific Studies of Hanoi University.

Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam

● *A young Khmer girl in Nam Bo (South Vietnam).*

Photo: TRONG THANH

● *Schoolchildren in the mountain area of Binh Tri Thien province.*

Photo: TRONG THANH

● *Young Bahnar gong-players.*

Photo: SY HUYNH

HOANG KIM DANG, a member of the executive committee of the Vietnam Association of Art Photographers, specializes in country landscapes and portraits of writers and artists.

Here are some of his pictures:

● *The writer NGUYEN TUAN.*

● *Elephant grass.*

● *Sunset on the ancient town of Hoi An.*

● *Hanoi suburbs.*

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